the weekly Standard

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OBAMA POLITICIZES INTELLIGENCE (AND COLLEGE FOOTBALL)
STEPHEN F. HAYES • JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

The New Dating Game

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BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

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[1] Press conference on U.S. climate change proposals at Bella Center, Copenhagen, Denmark, December 17, 2009. Video recording of Sen. Kerry's full statement on file at American Clean Skies Foundation.

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Contents

February 15, 2010 • Volume 15, Number 21

2 The Scrapbook — *'We Are the World,' Air America RIP & more*

5 Casual — *Ralph McInerny, 1929-2010*

6 Editorial — *Politicizing Intelligence*

Articles

8 Obama's Attorney General (for now) — BY JENNIFER RUBIN
Eric Holder botches the war on terror

10 Paul Ryan's Express — BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI
A congressman with a presidential-level agenda

11 The Clinton Voters Jump Ship — BY JONATHAN V. LAST
Obama's shrinking base

13 The Politicians Are Wrong — BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON
This is the golden age of college football

15 Getting It Backwards — BY JOHN YOO
Obama misunderstands his constitutional role

17 The 2007 Solution — BY FRED BARNES
Senator LeMieux's plan for the federal budget

Features

18 The New Dating Game — BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN
Back to the New Paleolithic Age

29 The Disarming of America — BY THOMAS DONNELLY
The outlook for our armed forces under Obama: not good

Books & Arts

32 Master in Depth — BY DAVID GELERNTER
The multidimensional Makoto Fujimura

34 Marriage à la Mode — BY CHARLOTTE HAYS
Why the cake remains an essential ingredient

35 Man vs. Machine — BY ELIZABETH POWERS
The intellectual legacy of Arthur Koestler

38 Scourge of Phonies — BY BARTON SWAIM
The teenage perspective of J.D. Salinger, 1919-2010

40 Winnie-the-Pooh II — BY MICHAEL TAUBE
Eeyore is wrong. You can go home again.

41 Apocalypse Then — BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ
Francis Ford Coppola's descent into journalism

43 Sacred Monster — BY JOHN PODHORETZ
Tolstoy's life and well-publicized death

44 Parody — *Obama skips the annual EU summit*

COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

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As the World Turns

When we heard last week that more than 80 pop music stars had collaborated to remake the famous "We Are the World" video from 1985, we were surprised, happy, and grateful.

Surprised? Yes, because we could scarcely believe that there are 80 pop musicians who can seriously be described as "stars" and further surprised to discover how many of these lucky people, even the most celebrated among them, have names designed to give the willies to the most well-adjusted proofreader: Will.I.Am, LL Cool J, India.Arie, Trey Songz, Iyaz, Jason Mraz, Musiq Soulchild, and Swizz Beatz, just for starters.

Back in 1985, the worst a well-adjusted proofreader had to worry about was correctly spelling Bruce Springsteen. (And we don't mean to imply that there are a lot of well-adjusted proofreaders.)

Happy? Yes, because the new video has the potential at last to transmute the limitless vanity and goofy cluelessness of show folk into something useful—in this instance, money to help the victims of the Haitian earthquake.

And grateful? You bet, because the new video gave us an excuse to dig up one of our favorite pieces by P.J. O'Rourke, our much-valued contributing editor. O'Rourke bent his ear and cast his jaundiced eye over the original song in 1985, in an article in the *American Spectator*. Mentioning how some critics had credited the song's composers—Lionel Richie, Quincy Jones, and Michael Jackson, back when he was alive—with "illuminating the plight" of the world's starving and helpless, O'Rourke wrote:

> Note the insights provided by these lyrics:
>
> *We are the world* [solipsism], *we are the children* [average age near forty]
> *We are the ones who make a brighter day* [see line 6 below]
> *So let's start giving* [logical inference supplied without argument]
> *There's a choice we're making* [true as far as it goes]
> *We're saving our own lives* [absurd]
> *It's true we'll make a better day* [unproven]
> *Just you and me* [statistically unlikely]
>
> That's three palpable untruths, two dubious assertions, nine uses of first-person pronoun, not a single reference to trouble or anybody in it, and no facts. The verse contains, literally, neither rhyme nor reason.

Twenty-five years later, O'Rourke's piece reads as if it were written yesterday. ♦

Air America, RIP

The Scrapbook could hardly allow the death of Air America to pass unnoticed. But that is the way our friends in the Mainstream Media tended to treat the story—which is a bit of a surprise, given the saturation coverage its birth inspired. There was a time, during 2004, when it seemed as if the *New York Times* couldn't allow a week to go by without extensive coverage of the exciting new left-wing challenge to conservative dominance of talk radio.

The problem, of course, is that Air America was never very good as a broadcast enterprise; and its underlying premise was fatally flawed. The reason conservatives dominate talk radio, and other precincts of alternative media, is the longtime, wearisome, pervasive liberal dominance of the aforementioned Mainstream Media. Conservative talk radio—of the Rush Limbaugh/Sean Hannity/Hugh Hewitt variety—fills a vacuum untouched by the Mainstream Media; Air America was just a poor man's version of the *Times*, CBS, *Newsweek*, and so on.

Liberal Voices (Some Sharp) Get New Home On Radio Dial

By JACQUES STEINBERG

The New York Times, March 31, 2004

But what memories! The ownership changes, corporate revolving door, executive musical chairs. The host of "The O'Franken Factor" (get it?) is now the junior senator from Minnesota. Talk show hostess Rachel Maddow graduated from Air America to sharing space (and a swiftly diminishing TV audience) with Keith Olbermann on MSNBC. There was "Go Vegan" with Bob Linden, "Springer on the Radio" with Jerry Springer, ex-comedienne Janeane Garofalo, "Wonkette" (Ana Marie Cox), and "Mother Jones Radio."

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Talk show hostess Randi Rhodes, who specialized in abusive language, had an eponymous program for awhile before being fired—for calling Geraldine Ferraro "David Duke in drag"—and then landed at Nova M Radio, which went bankrupt before Air America.

According to the *Washington Post*, the last chairman of Air America, Charlie Kireker, wrote in a memo to employees that "the company was done in by 'a perfect storm' of plunging ad revenues, intense competition, high debt and poor prospects for new financing."

We can think of other reasons. But the most poignant epitaph for Air America is this hilarious paragraph in the *Post* story:

> Since last summer, Air America has been heard in the Washington area on WZAA (1050 AM). Its audience has been so small that Arbitron, which compiles radio ratings, was unable to detect any listeners for WZAA during several weeks in December.

So long Air America. Gone, but not remembered (except here). ♦

THE COW JUMPED OVER THE..... NEVER MIND.

Maureen Dowd's Source Problem

If you didn't read last week's Maureen Dowd column ("Defending the Long Gay Line," February 3) in the *New York Times*, you missed a historic event. No, we're not talking about the substance of Dowd's column—progressive boilerplate on gays in the military—but about the fact that it is probably the first, last, and (in The Scrapbook's estimation) only piece of journalism in which Senator Roland Burris, D-Ill., has been, or ever will be, quoted as an authoritative source:

> And Roland Burris, the Illinois senator, reminded his colleagues that it took Harry Truman to integrate the services: "At one time, my uncles and members of my race couldn't even serve in the military, and we've moved to this point where they're some of the best and brightest that we've had—generals and even now the commander in chief is of African-American heritage."

For readers who might be unfamiliar with Senator Burris, he is the veteran Chicago politician who was appointed in 2009 to fill Barack Obama's vacant Senate seat—by Democratic governor Rod Blagojevich, after the governor had initiated his famous pay-for-play program to fill the vacancy, and just before the governor was driven from office. Burris, who remains under investigation for allegations that his appointment was made in exchange for promises of cash, and that he lied to investigators about the circumstances of his appointment, is not seeking election to a full term.

And best of all—not that Maureen Dowd seems to have known this—Burris is also flatly wrong about the history of African Americans in the armed services. It is true that the U.S. Army was racially segregated until 1948, and that there were no black officers in the Navy until World War II; but African Americans have fought, bravely and in huge numbers and in storied outfits, in every one of America's wars since the Revolution—indeed, since before the Revolution. There were black soldiers in the French and Indian War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Indian wars, the Spanish-American War, both world wars, Korea—180,000 black soldiers served in the Union Army, and even the Confederate Army recruited blacks late in the Civil War. In short, there has almost never been a time in our history when

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African Americans "couldn't even serve in the military."

It is possible, of course, that Senator Burris's uncles wanted to be pilots, and couldn't pass a vision test, or sought commissions for which they were unqualified. But that is not the same as "members of my race" being banned from service. If Maureen Dowd wasn't aware of this history, 72-year-old Roland Burris should know it. ♦

Signs of the Times

Under the headline "Forget Polls, Here's Tangible Proof the Obama Honeymoon is Over," Doug Heye, an old political hand now blogging for *U.S. News*, reports on a hard-hit segment of the retail market:

> One sign that Washington, D.C., had been home to Obama Mania was the number of independent retailers selling all sorts of Obama merchandise. Every street corner, it seemed, had Obama wares (or Obama wear) for sale. Now, however, most of the winter caps for sale are not emblazoned with the Obama logo. . . . This time last year, the Obama Store was teeming with customers. Ideally situated in the basement of Washington's Union Station, the store was filled with consumers eager to buy anything with Obama's likeness while others took pictures of the life-size cut-outs of the president and first lady. Now, the Obama Store is boarded up. How quickly things change in a year. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'The last thing we expected was a return to one-word politics, but that's what evolved. Before 1960, the one word was 'segregation.' You could stamp it on the most hapless of candidates and win an election. After 1980, the one word became 'conservative,' as a label for the set of Bible Belt social values that hardened into its present calcified state with . . . " (Howell Raines, *New York Times*, February 1). ♦

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Ralph McInerny, 1929-2010

When Ralph McInerny landed back in the United States and cashed his GI check, a civilian again, the first thing he did was run to a bookstore to buy a copy of *Lord Weary's Castle*, Robert Lowell's new collection of poems.

Or so he told me once, and then he laughed and gave a deprecating shrug, because—well, because that's the kind of thing smart boys with literary pretensions did in those days, and if there ever was one of those smart 1940s literary boys, it was Ralph McInerny. Besides, Lowell had produced an amazingly *Catholic* book, and the Catholic Renaissance that included everyone from Flannery O'Connor to Thomas Merton was about to take off in America.

They are slipping away from us one by one, the people who can remember those times that once seemed so promising. Names like Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson had a weight about them; you could conjure with them and see the future—a world turned high scholastic and Neo-Thomistic: Catholic philosophy and Catholic art joining to make a golden age.

On another occasion, I asked Ralph what he thought had happened—why, by the late 1960s, the whole Renaissance had faded, first to fantasy and then to dust. But he merely gave another of those shrugs and said, "We just weren't good enough."

If Ralph McInerny wasn't good enough, it's hard to imagine who could have been. He went up to Quebec to study medieval philosophy under Charles De Koninck (another in the Maritain/Gilson line, making Thomism seem, at that moment, the most exciting philosophy around). Doctorate in hand, he landed at Notre Dame in 1955—and there he stayed for the rest of his life, publishing scholarly tomes (some twenty nonfiction volumes, in all) and establishing himself among the leading philosophers in America. *Aquinas and Analogy* is probably the most important of the books, and his Gifford Lectures, *Characters in Search of Their Author*, formed his most serious attempt to return, late in life, to the unity of philosophy and art with which he began.

He had a journalism career, as well, as a columnist and a culture warrior, founding *Crisis* magazine with Michael Novak in the 1980s.

Ralph McInerny

NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY

He wrote about sports, and the great moral issues of the day, and the internal struggles of the Catholic Church, and the literary legacy of his friend, the novelist J.F. Powers. He even wrote poetry, publishing a collection of Shakespearean sonnets and a volume of reflections on death.

And then there were the mysteries. Twenty-nine books starring his clerical detective, Father Dowling (played by Tom Bosley in the 1980s television series). Another thirteen set at Notre Dame. Ten more featuring a nun mystery-solver (published under the pen name "Monica Quill"), and twelve with other detectives—sixty-two mystery novels, in all, between 1977 and 2009.

It was too much, particularly when you add the nineteen non-mystery novels he also wrote (the best of them probably his 1967 academic novel *Jolly Rogerson* and his 1973 bestseller *The Priest*). Ralph had reasonably good sales and some recognition, but the mysteries to which he devoted most of his writing were always a little on the thin side—stronger in prose and character than in the actual puzzle. Besides, they had those awful titles he couldn't stop himself from giving them. As his student Thomas Hibbs remarked, the problem wasn't just that Ralph would make bad puns; it was that he seemed to prefer the bad ones—giving his books such titles as *A Handbook for Peeping Thomists*, *On This Rockne*, and *Nun Plussed*.

It's worth contrasting all this with Powers, the enormously celebrated Catholic writer of that same generation. When the Catholic Renaissance collapsed, Powers, undeterred, continued to write brilliantly polished, delicate prose at his same slow, one-book-a-decade rate. More of an activist, Ralph slipped instead into pour-it-out mode, never stopping to look back or revise.

He told me once that he sometimes wished he had slowed down, making a stronger effort to maintain the high literary goals of the world in which he began. But I didn't believe him. He simply lived and worked at a constant pitch of ceaseless activity.

When he died two weeks ago, at the age of 80, he took from us the last, best argument for that Thomistic synthesis of philosophy and art that had seemed so fresh and new in the 1940s. He wrote some truly fine intellectual studies and some serious fiction, but his books were a secondary effect. Really, the Catholic Renaissance produced one of its brightest works just by giving us the life of Ralph McInerny.

Joseph Bottum

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Politicizing Intelligence

Last week, a little more than 24 hours after the FBI warned senators not to disclose the sensitive information that Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was cooperating with the FBI, the White House shared the information with the news media.

An indignant Christopher "Kit" Bond, the ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, immediately wrote to President Obama, complaining that he had been told by FBI Director Robert Mueller that the cooperation of the Nigerian terrorist who tried to bomb a Northwest passenger jet over Detroit was extremely sensitive information and was to be kept quiet. It was so sensitive, in fact, that the entire committee wasn't briefed, just Bond and the committee chairman Dianne Feinstein.

"On Monday afternoon, the leadership of the Senate Intelligence Committee received notification from the Federal Bureau of Investigation concerning Abdulmutallab's recent willingness to provide critical information," Bond wrote. "FBI officials stressed the importance of not disclosing the fact of his cooperation in order to protect on-going and follow-on operations to neutralize additional threats to the American public; FBI Director Bob Mueller personally stressed to me that keeping the fact of his cooperation quiet was vital to preventing future attacks against the United States."

Robert Gibbs

At the White House briefing Thursday afternoon, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs attacked Bond for politicizing intelligence and haughtily demanded an apology: "No briefing is done here or anywhere in this administration where classified information is used in a place where it shouldn't be," Gibbs said. "And I would suggest that somebody that alleges that, when they know it doesn't happen, owe[s] people an apology."

The White House contends that the sensitive information about cooperation from Abdulmutallab was unintentionally disclosed during a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on Tuesday. At the hearing, Mueller responded to concern from Senator Olympia Snowe that the decision to mirandize the terrorist so quickly meant that the U.S. government missed valuable intelligence. "Let me just add one other point, and that is, it is a continuum. In other words you can look at it in that day, but I encourage you to look at what has happened since then. It is a continuum in which over a period of time we have been successful in obtaining intelligence, not just on day one, but day two, day three, day four, day five and down the road."

That's not much of a disclosure. But Gibbs explained that the White House felt the need to provide background briefings about what Abdulmutallab was now saying in order to "contextualize" the information after receiving inquiries from reporters.

Just helping out with the facts, ma'am. But as CNN's Ed Henry (presumably one of the contextualizees) reported: "The revelation is part of an aggressive attempt by the White House to push back on Republican claims the Obama administration mishandled the terror investigation, with Abdulmutallab being read his Miranda rights shortly after he began cooperating with investigators."

Now where could Bond—and many others—have gotten the idea that the White House was using the information to score political points?

So a week that began with the White House struggling to defend its manifest incompetence in the aftermath of the Christmas Day attack ended with a desperate White House press secretary unconvincingly batting down a growing sense that the Obama administration was letting politics—not national security—drive its response to the attempted bombing of Flight 253.

What made Gibbs's job particularly difficult was the fact that some of the criticism was coming from unexpected sources. One day before Bond's letter, at a hearing of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Obama's director of national intelligence, Dennis Blair, worried aloud about the administration's political use of sensitive intelligence. Representative Peter King repeatedly pressed Blair about whether the White House briefing for reporters on Abdulmutallab had been cleared by the intelligence community. At first, Blair attempted to duck the question. "Again, Congressman King, I'm not going to comment on the internal processes for this investigation right now."

King did not let the issue drop. He ended another long statement accusing the Obama administration of politicizing intelligence by saying, "I just wondered if the entire

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intelligence community was consulted on that before these political decisions were made [to release information]."

This time, Blair responded, haltingly. "I understand your question, sir," he said. "As I said before, I—the—but the level of—the level of—the political dimension of what to me ought to be a national security issue has—has been quite—quite high. I don't think it's been very—particularly good, I will tell you, from the inside and in terms of us trying to get the right job done to—to protect the United States."

Politico reported that Blair's words were a "blast" at the White House, and Blair's office issued a clarification later in the day attempting to separate Blair's words from the question that prompted them. Although the question had been about the White House and politicization of intelligence, and although Blair prefaced his answer by saying "I understand your question, sir," a statement from Blair spokesman Arthur House claimed "the DNI did not criticize the administration in any way."

Did the White House tell the DNI to clarify Blair's statement? If so, it wouldn't be the first time. Two weeks ago, when Blair testified before the Senate Homeland Security Committee, he said that the U.S. government had made a "mistake" by not allowing the high-value detainee interrogation group (the HIG) to question Abdulmutallab. Within hours, under the headline, "Intel Chief's Comments Infuriate Obama Officials," *Newsweek* magazine reported that the "White House has ordered Blair to 'correct' his remarks." Blair did so quickly, noting that the HIG did not yet exist at the time Abdulmutallab was detained.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs attacked Bond for politicizing intelligence and haughtily demanded an apology.

Obama officials were no doubt embarrassed by the gaffe. But what really made them angry? "Administration officials said the comments by Blair were especially galling because they seemed to vindicate the chief Republican criticism of the handling of the Detroit incident," *Newsweek* reported. And in case there were any confusion about his new views, Blair emphasized them again in an odd exchange during the Intelligence Committee hearing on Tuesday. As Senator Bond was questioning Mueller, Blair interrupted, offering his unsolicited support for the Obama administration.

> There are decisions that have to be made in which you balance the requirement for intelligence with the requirement for a prosecution and the—the sorts of pressure you can bring on—bring on to the people that you arrest in either form. It's got to be a decision made at the time, and I think the balance struck in the Mutallab case was a very—was an understandable balance."

Two weeks earlier Blair had called the interrogation a "mistake." Now, after his scolding by the White House, he was eagerly defending it.

The administration is apparently so overwhelmed by its spin efforts some officials have continued to push bogus narratives even after they've been put to rest, on the record, by senior officials. For example, a *Washington Post* story Thursday sourced largely to "administration officials" repeated the false claim that Abdulmutallab had already stopped talking when interrogators mirandized him.

According to the *Post*: "Administration officials have acknowledged that the suspect initially spoke to investigators for less than an hour before being treated for injuries. He then asked for a lawyer, although U.S. officials say he stopped speaking to investigators before he was read his rights." But three sources familiar with Abdulmutallab's interrogations told The Weekly Standard that the al Qaeda operative stopped talking only upon being advised of his right to remain silent.

In any case, Mueller, during his testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Tuesday, acknowledged, without qualification, that Abdulmutallab stopped talking once he was provided with a lawyer:

> We were then given an opportunity later that night to again interview him, and after consultation—or in consultation with Justice Department attorneys, we determined to follow our protocols, protocols established by the Supreme Court, in terms of how you interrogate and question individuals in custody in the United States. He was—a team went in to talk with him, he talked for a few moments, and then afterwards, after he was given his Miranda warnings, asked for an attorney, and we discontinued the questioning.

Abdulmutallab stopped talking—and the FBI "discontinued the questioning"—after he was given his Miranda warnings and asked for a lawyer, not before. But "administration officials" continue to tell reporters otherwise.

It is understandable that the White House would be eager to try to spin away the incompetence on display in the aftermath of the Christmas Day bombing, and to explain away the deleterious national security implications of the administration's stubborn insistence on treating terrorists as criminal suspects who need to be read their rights like ordinary criminal suspects.

But it's also understandable that Kit Bond and other members of Congress are outraged: "After telling me to keep my mouth shut, the White House discloses sensitive information in an effort to defend a dangerous and unpopular decision to mirandize Abdulmutallab, and I'm supposed to apologize?"

The American people have reason to be concerned for our security—and outraged about the administration's putting politics first.

—*Stephen F. Hayes*

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Obama's Attorney General (for now)

Eric Holder botches the war on terror.

BY JENNIFER RUBIN

Attorney General Eric Holder has been the Obama administration's point man in revising the nation's approach to terrorism. Holder said last summer that it was his decision to reinvestigate CIA operatives who had employed enhanced interrogation techniques during the Bush administration, although these individuals had been cleared by the Justice Department's career prosecutors. It was Holder's call, the president said, to try Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) in a New York courtroom rather than before a military tribunal. And Holder, in a letter this past week, took responsibility for the decision to mirandize the Christmas Day bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, and classify him as an ordinary criminal defendant rather than an enemy combatant.

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There is doubt whether Holder was acting independently in all these critical decisions, and whether the White House would not, at the very least, have weighed in. Either way, Holder has become the president's Achilles' heel, a lightning rod for critics and a headache for supporters.

Defending his KSM decision, Holder appeared ill-prepared in Senate testimony last November. A fumbling attorney general was stumped by Senator Lindsey Graham's questions probing what other enemy combatant seized on foreign soil had been tried in federal court. The answer, after a painful pause, was supplied by Graham: There has never been one. Nor did Holder rule out mirandizing Osama bin Laden if he were captured.

It is not merely poor preparation that has plagued the nation's top law enforcement figure. As New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg and a bipartisan parade of senators came forward objecting to KSM's trial in Manhattan, it became evident Holder had failed to consult with city officials before announcing the decision. New York Police Department chief Ray Kelly revealed, "There was no consultation . . . with the police department. That decision was made. We were informed." Bloomberg then blasted away: "It would be great if the federal government could find a site that didn't cost a billion dollars. . . . It's going to cost an awful lot of money and disturb an awful lot of people. . . . Yeah, and I mean—the suggestion of a military base is probably a reasonably good one." Some 18 senators then joined in proposing legislation to block a civilian trial.

Holder, in short, utterly failed to build support for what he bragged would be the "trial of the century." Even liberal pundits were left sputtering that Holder had botched what was to be the showcase for the criminal justice approach to fighting terrorism.

Holder is now on the hot seat for his decision to mirandize Abdulmutallab, indict him in federal court, and permit him to remain silent for weeks. One by one, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of Homeland Secu-

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rity Janet Napolitano, and Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair testified that this was not *their* call and that they had not been consulted by Holder before Abdulmutallab's legal status was determined.

Meanwhile Holder stonewalled. He refused to answer multiple letters from lawmakers about the decision to mirandize Abdulmutallab or the Justice Department's policy for handling captured terrorists. Alabama Republican Jeff Sessions, the ranking minority member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, released a statement last week decrying Holder's lack of responsiveness. "We have been asking the Attorney General questions on behalf of the American people. He has not simply shut us out; he has also shut out the public." And in a February 3 speech, Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell articulated the growing unease over allowing a "law enforcement mentality [to] intrude into military and intelligence operations" and over Holder's reticence to explain the administration's policies to Congress.

That same day, in a letter to McConnell, Holder finally pulled back the curtain a bit. He defended his handling of the Christmas Day bomber as consistent with "the long-established and publicly known policies and practices of the Department of Justice." He pronounced himself confident "that the decision to address Mr. Abdulmutallab's actions through our criminal justice system has not, and will not, compromise our ability to obtain information needed to detect and prevent future attacks." He then asserted:

> I made the decision to charge Mr. Abdulmutallab with federal crimes, and to seek his detention in connection with those charges, with the knowledge of, and with no objection from, all other relevant departments of the government. On the evening of December 25 and again on the morning of December 26, the FBI informed its partners in the Intelligence Community that Abdulmutallab would be charged criminally, and no agency objected to this course of action. In the days following December 25—including during a meeting with the President and other senior members of his national security team on January 5—high-level discussions ensued within the Administration in which the possibility of detaining Mr. Abdulmutallab under the law of war was explicitly discussed. No agency supported the use of law of war detention for Abdulmutallab, and no agency has since advised the Department of Justice that an alternative course of action should have been, or should now be, pursued.

The letter raised more questions than it answered. Most starkly, it conflicts with the testimony of other high-ranking Obama officials that they were *not* consulted. Were subordinate functionaries ("partners in the Intelligence Community") informed, but not the key department heads? Did Holder present them with a *fait accompli*, making the other officials think it was futile to weigh in? Holder was decidedly vague regarding the January 5 conversation, leaving unclear whether others in fact criticized his decision.

Holder's letter contains other problematic assertions. A Capitol Hill aide noted that while Holder takes responsibility for charging Abdulmutallab in federal court, "he is much more vague about who made the decision to give Abdulmutallab his Miranda warnings." The aide wonders, "Was the director of the FBI or the attorney general involved? Were any senior intelligence officials consulted? Or, as seems likely, did a lower-level official simply jump the gun, and is the administration now trying to bury that fact, particularly because it might suggest that the AG was out of the loop on Christmas day?"

Holder offers no real argument for favoring a criminal justice approach. Instead, his letter claims that treating Abdulmutallab as a criminal defendant follows Bush administration policy. A former Justice official remarks ruefully, "On Bush, I found it remarkable how [Obama administration officials] are now trying to characterize him as weak and wimpy on terrorism (after all, he used the criminal process for all of these guys), and how they are trying [at the same time] to wrap themselves in [Bush's] mantle. Quite a turnabout in rhetorical strategy."

Once again, Holder's legal exposition is less than compelling. For example, Holder claims the handling of Abdulmutallab was "fully consistent" with prior cases, but his letter refers to Jose Padilla and Ali Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri, two terror suspects captured in the United States, whom President George W. Bush ordered to be transferred to military custody.

Several lawyers expert in these matters also point out that on Padilla, Holder cites a Second Circuit opinion reversed by the Supreme Court and refers to a Fourth Circuit decision vacated by the High Court. A former Justice official says: "Holder is increasingly looking like a buffoon. In his letter of self-defense, he says it is an open question whether terrorists arrested in the U.S. may legally be detained as enemy combatants, but he relies on a case overturned by the Supreme Court. Then he makes himself seem even more foolish by not mentioning that the court of appeals that ended up deciding that same case ruled that they *could* be held as enemy combatants. A first-year lawyer would get fired for a dumb error like that." Nor does Holder acknowledge the military tribunal system put in place by statutes in 2006 and 2009, which provides an alternative to the criminal justice model he vehemently defends.

Holder also relies on the Zacarias Moussaoui case to bolster the argument for a civilian trial, which is also a terrible precedent. That proceeding took four and a half years, and the presiding judge said of the trial, "I don't think in the annals of criminal law there has ever been a case with this many significant problems."

Holder's letter, like his November testimony on the KSM trial, will likely fan the flames of bipartisan criticism. But the president's decision to distance himself from Holder's decisionmaking gives Obama room to reverse course, and maybe even to throw overboard the self-proclaimed architect of the bungled plans, none other than Holder himself. ♦

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The Wisconsin congressman's Roadmap for America's Future

ASSOCIATED PRESS / J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

Paul Ryan's Express

A congressman with a presidential-level agenda.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Representative Paul Ryan's 40th birthday coincided with the House GOP retreat in Baltimore on January 29. Ryan's wife and three children joined him for the event. President Obama was also there, at the invitation of the House Republican leadership, to deliver remarks and answer questions from selected members. And he had a surprise in store for the six-term Wisconsin Republican: a spur-of-the-moment, presidential-level debate over the federal budget.

Hmm, Ryan thought. This is interesting. The two engaged in a back-and-forth over the president's increase in discretionary spending during fiscal year 2010. Later, Obama said that Ryan, the ranking member of the House Budget and Ways & Means Committees, is "a pretty sincere guy" with "a beautiful family." Later still, the two went at it once more, this time over the politics of Medicare. "I want to make sure that I'm not being unfair to your proposal," Obama said.

He was talking about Ryan's "Roadmap for America's Future," an ambitious plan to overhaul the welfare state and pay off the national debt (you can read the 95-page document at www.americanroadmap.org). For Americans under 55, the Roadmap would fundamentally restructure Medicare and Medicaid through means-tested vouchers, while introducing opt-in personal accounts to Social Security. It would replace the corporate income tax with a business consumption tax; repeal the Alternative Minimum, dividend, capital gains, and estate taxes; and reduce the six current tax brackets to two—one at 10 percent, the other at 25 percent. And that's not all. Other parts of the plan include job training programs, budgetary reforms, and a free-market health care proposal modeled on Ryan's Patients Choice Act. "This works," Ryan told me last week. "It solves our fiscal crisis. It turns it around." The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office agrees with him.

No question, the Roadmap is a big idea. But it isn't a new one. Ryan initially released the proposal in 2008, when it fell flat. "First they laughed at us, then they ignored us," says Representative Devin Nunes of California, a Ryan ally.

What's changed? America has fallen into a vat of red ink. The financial crisis and recession have darkened the country's long-term fiscal outlook. Unemployment stands at 9.7 percent. The president's fiscal year 2011 budget forecasts record deficits and debt long into the future. Inflation, punishing interest rates, high taxes, and economic stagnation are not far behind. Hence the Democrats, who can't defend their own budgets, desperately want to change the subject. They've found one they like: what's wrong with Ryan's Roadmap.

Obama, White House budget chief Peter Orszag, and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chairman Chris Van Hollen have all attacked Ryan's proposal as hurting the elderly. So has the Democratic National Committee and the White House-friendly media. In his latest column, *Time* magazine's Joe Klein writes that the Roadmap is "an all-out assault on the financial security of the nation's most devout voters." The *Washington Post*'s domestic policy blogger wrote last week that "Ryan's budget proposes reforms that are nothing short of violent."

Not so. Ryan preserves the current entitlement system for everyone over the age of 55. Nor do the critics men-

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tion that the only way to avoid a fiscal crisis decades from now is by means-testing benefits, raising the retirement age, and otherwise reducing the government's future obligations. The alternative is insolvency and "austerity plans" imposed by the IMF.

Liberals accuse Ryan of cutting future Medicare benefits. True enough—but they're missing the point. "Any reform would do that," he says. "They want to do it by a government monopoly and rationing. We attack the root cause of health care inflation by introducing free-market mechanisms into the system."

Ryan's political problem is that he's a congressman with a presidential-level agenda. The Roadmap is a realistic way to clean up America's fiscal mess, but there is no chance of it becoming law as long as Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid run Congress and Barack Obama is president. Moreover, Bush's failed Social Security reform and Obama's doomed health bill show that a president has to have large congressional majorities as well as public approval to pass major changes to entitlement law.

What the Roadmap needs is support from a Republican presidential aspirant. Ryan insists it won't be him, however. He says he has no plans to run for president in 2012. His disavowal, he goes on, is "Shermanesque."

That may disappoint conservatives and Republicans who have found Ryan to be an engaging television presence and a successful political entrepreneur. He's young, charismatic, wonky, and well spoken. He's already held his own against President Obama. His national profile is on the rise. He recently endorsed conservative favorite Marco Rubio in the Florida Senate Republican primary. He's scheduled to speak at two fundraisers in New Hampshire later this month.

Devin Nunes jokes that he's the charter member of the "Draft Ryan" club. As the budget outlook grows darker, expect membership in the club to rise. Because sometimes you don't pick the moment. Sometimes the moment picks you. ♦

The Clinton Voters Jump Ship

Obama's shrinking base. BY JONATHAN V. LAST

The conventional wisdom is that Barack Obama's decline in the polls represents a new, unexpected turn against him. But an examination of the results of the recent elections in Virginia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts suggests that what we might really be seeing is a return to the skepticism that significant portions of the electorate have showed about Obama from the beginning of his national career.

For six months during the 2008 primaries, Obama and Hillary Clinton crisscrossed the country wooing voters. Obama consistently failed to win over important parts of the Democratic base, even after it became clear that he was going to be his party's nominee.

On February 5—Super Tuesday—Obama did poorly in both New Jersey and Massachusetts, losing to Clinton by 10 and 15 points, respectively. The exit polls were in line with Obama's performance throughout the primary race: He did very well with blacks, wealthy voters, highly educated voters, and very young voters. He did poorly with working-class whites and older voters. In New Jersey, Obama was +20 among voters under the age of 29, but about -26 among voters over 50. In Massachusetts, he ran even with young voters, and -31 among those over 65. As for education, Obama was -41 among voters with only a high school degree, but ran even, or just ahead, among voters possessing postgraduate degrees. And then there was gender and race. In New Jersey, Obama was -19 among white men; in Massachusetts he was +1.

In addition to the demography, there was geography. Obama ran well in urban enclaves. He also did well in college towns and state capitals. But he did poorly in the suburbs and in smaller industrial towns.

A week after Super Tuesday, Obama won the Virginia primary. He performed somewhat better in all categories, even winning white men by 18 points. But his victory came largely from blacks (who made up 30 percent of the vote, and whom he won 90 to 10) and the upscale Northern Virginia suburbs, increasingly home to a highly educated class of government and technology workers.

Reviewing the primary fight, Michael Barone noted that Obama got majorities "from whites only in his home state (Illinois), in states where the white Democratic primary electorate is unusually upscale and non-Jewish (Virginia, Vermont), and in mountain states where the cultural divide is not black-white." This racial divide, Barone explained, was part of a larger, cultural divide between Jacksonians and academics. "In state after state, we have seen Obama do extraordinarily well in academic and state capital enclaves. In state after state, we have seen Clinton do extraordinarily well in enclaves dominated by Jacksonians."

The Jacksonian Democrats tended to be white and working-class; the academics tended to be highly educated, and often government employees. This divide is often attributed to latent racism in the Jacksonians. But a suspicion of Barack Obama shouldn't make you a racist. Consider the case of Buchanan County, a Jacksonian stronghold on the Virginia border next to both West Virginia and Kentucky. Obama lost Buchanan County to Hillary Clinton by a margin of 90 to 9. Which might make one view Buchananites with some sus-

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picion—except that in the 1989 gubernatorial race, Douglas Wilder won Buchanan County by 18 points over his (white) Republican rival.

In the general election, Obama was finally able to convert some of the voters who had resisted him. Massachusetts doesn't have many Jacksonians, but it does have white ethnic enclaves. Obama went +7 among white Massachusetts men, and his share of white Democrats was nearly the same as his share of all Democrats, meaning that he brought home most of the Clinton voters. In New Jersey, he did less well in this conversion: His white Democratic share ran 4 points behind his overall Democratic share. In Virginia, the Jacksonians warmed to him. After getting shellacked in Buchanan County by Clinton, he lost to McCain there by only 5 points.

The question, then, is how these various coalition groups—the white ethnic enclaves, the Jacksonians, the suburban and industrial town voters—have reacted to Democrats since Obama took office. And the answer is: Without enthusiasm.

In Virginia, Republican Bob McDonnell won an 18-point victory in a state Obama carried by 6 points. Obama had been -24 among white men in 2008; McDonnell was +43. Obama had carried every income bracket under $75,000 by at least double-digit margins. McDonnell was -8 among those making between $15,000 and $30,000 a year. He was +6 from there up to $50,000 and +28 among those making between $50,000 and $75,000. Where Obama had lost whites without college degrees by a big margin—34 percent—McDonnell did even better than McCain had, rolling up a 51-point advantage. Buchanan County? McDonnell won it by 26 points, a 21-point swing against the Democrats.

In New Jersey, it was worse. Chris Christie was outspent by a millionaire incumbent in a state Obama won by 15 points. Christie won by 5 points, and the exit polls showed defections among the same groups who had been against Obama in the presidential primaries. Where Obama had been only -3 among white men, Christie was +34; where Obama had run even with older whites, Christie was +25; where Obama had been competitive among non-college educated whites (he was only -4 in the general election), Christie was +34. In the rural south, Obama had won Gloucester and Salem counties easily. A year later, they went for Christie. In heavily industrialized Passaic County, Obama had won by 21 points; Christie came within 8.

Which leaves Massachusetts. There were no exit polls for the January special election. One approximation comes from a Public Policy Polling survey conducted a few days before the election, which concluded with Scott Brown ahead by 5 points. Brown was +12 among white voters (Obama had been +20), and the poll suggested that Brown did very well among middle-

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aged voters: He was +14 among those age 30 to 44 and +3 from age 45 to 64. Among these groups Obama had been +18 and +20. The town and county results tell the same story. Plymouth and Worcester counties are two ethnic, blue-collar strongholds that went heavily for Clinton in the primaries, by 21 and 25 points, respectively. Brown won them by similar margins: +26 in Plymouth and +23 in Worcester.

Caveats abound, of course. This is an exercise in apples and oranges, comparing Democratic primary voters with general election voters. It artificially claims three distinct Democratic candidates as generic proxies for Obama—and even uses a preelection poll sample in lieu of actual exit poll data. This can't count for science, even on the Internet.

But if we accept that the comparisons are at least marginally valid, then Obama is not encountering some new, unanticipated resistance from the electorate. Instead, it may be that his general election triumph was the aberration—that his coalition was never as strong as the financial panic of September 2008 made it seem. It would mean that he is now returning to his natural base of support and that the Jacksonians and others who resisted him in the primaries have turned away once again from his charms.

But it also suggests something more, that the Democratic party is now the party of Obama, for good and for ill. While the president is no Jacksonian, his party has many in its ranks. Democratic officeholders should be concerned about their voters fleeing not just from Obama but from their party as well. The president may be in the process of trimming the Democratic base back into something that looks an awful lot like his own primary base.

A few weeks ago Representative Marion Berry, a Jacksonian from Arkansas's First District, recounted an exchange he had with the president. Asked how he was going to prevent a midterm disaster on the scale of 1994, Obama replied, "Well, the big difference here and in '94 was you've got me." Which may be precisely the problem. ♦

The Politicians Are Wrong

This is the golden age of college football.

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

You know how at Super Bowl parties you often have to endure the painful commentary of non-football fans who feel the need to pontificate about various aspects of the game? Well, at least those fans aren't usually U.S. senators, and they aren't usually intent on making their peculiar views the basis of a Justice Department investigation.

But sometimes they are. Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah recently wrote to President Obama, asking him to have the Justice Department investigate the allegedly sinister workings of the Bowl Championship Series (BCS). Hatch wrote, "I have long believed that our antitrust laws play an essential role in ensuring our nation's long-term prosperity." Highlighting a key part of maintaining that prosperity, he continued, "I believe there is a strong case that the BCS violates the Sherman Act."

Obama and Hatch want to move us to a playoff, which Boise State would probably have to go undefeated to make. Then they would have to win two more games versus the nation's most elite competition just to make it to the big game. This would *improve* their chances?

Jeffrey H. Anderson is the co-creator of the Anderson & Hester Rankings.

A few days ago, the Justice Department's Office of Legislative Affairs told Hatch it was considering whether to "open an investigation into the legality of the current system under the antitrust laws." BCS executive director Bill Hancock replied that this is "nothing new," adding that "if the Justice Department thought there was a case to be made, they likely would have made it already." Nevertheless, the playoff advocates were whipped into a frenzy, with *Sports Illustrated*'s Andy Staples writing that we should "get ready for some form of a college football playoff."

That's certainly what Hatch is hoping for. Last fall, he joined with Representatives Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii) and Joe Barton (R-Texas) in forming a political action committee called Playoff PAC. Not everyone was impressed. Rece Davis, the host of ESPN's *College Football Final*, said, "This new political action committee championed by Orrin Hatch, among other politicos, is the biggest hot air hoax since we thought little Falcon was floating in that balloon."

The BCS was formed in 1998 to establish an official national championship game. Each year, the game's participants are the top two teams in the BCS standings, which in turn are based on two subjective polls (the *USA Today* coaches' poll and the Harris Interactive poll), with each composing a third of the standings, and six computer rankings, which compose the other third. (Chris Hester and I created one of those six computer rankings, the Anderson & Hester Rankings, which have been a part of the BCS since its inception.)

Hatch claims that "the current sys-

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tem ensures that only teams from the BCS's preferred conferences can qualify to play in the national championship game." This is patently false. In fact, not only do small-conference teams have a shot to play in the game, they have exactly the same shot as any other team. They simply have to finish in the top two in the BCS standings. If they don't get there, it's because the poll voters, in combination with computer rankings that don't discriminate against them in the least, don't think they're good enough.

Hatch's particular beef is that, two seasons ago, the Utah Utes made the BCS but were invited to the Sugar Bowl rather than the title game. Of the 61 coaches who voted that season, not one ranked Utah first, second, third, or fourth. The Utes' own coach, Kyle Whittingham, ranked them fifth, behind four one-loss teams. Even if there had been a four-team playoff, the Utes, who finished sixth in the BCS Standings (though second in my rankings), would not have been invited. But when your own coach doesn't think you belong, it's hard to argue too vehemently that you've been robbed by not having been invited to play for the national championship.

Hatch also complains that the champions of major conferences get automatic spots in the BCS bowls. But he neglects to note that, without the BCS, small-conference teams would essentially never play in those bowls. The bowls, which are private entities, would just return to their earlier practice of contracting with the elite conferences to fill their berths, as is true for every non-BCS bowl game on New Year's Day. Does Hatch really think it's illegal for the Rose Bowl to contract with the Pac-10 and Big Ten, an alliance that dates back to 1947?

President Obama has also weighed in. "I'm fed up with these computer rankings," he said. "Get eight teams—the top eight teams right at the end. You got a playoff. Decide on a national champion." He added, "I don't know any serious fan of college football who has disagreed with me on this."

The president needs to get out and meet some serious college football fans. Matt Hayes of the *Sporting News* wrote, "I don't want to sniff a playoff. The bowl system is the best thing that college football has going for it." Stewart Mandel of *Sports Illustrated* called college football "the only sport where every single game truly matters." Bill Plaschke of the *Los Angeles Times* said the BCS has "transformed the sport from a Saturday afternoon cookout to a national obsession." Jason Whitlock of the *Kansas City Star* wrote that "college football has the greatest regular season in all of team sports, and a playoff would ruin that distinction." Teddy Greenstein of the *Chicago Tribune* said,

> Amid all the fun, we have people yelling that the sport has to change. It needs a playoff system. Why? So the casual fans who are confused by the BCS and the angry columnists who write about college football three times a year can get finality. So the next time someone complains about a "BCS mess" . . . roll your eyes, shake your head and smile. You know better.

If only Hatch and Obama knew better. Instead, Obama said, "I'm going to throw my weight around a little bit. I think it's the right thing to do."

Yet his proposed eight-team playoff would have left another undefeated team, Boise State, on the outside looking in for two years running. The Broncos have gone 12-0 and 13-0 the last two regular seasons and won a BCS bowl game—the Fiesta Bowl—this year. But with an eight-team playoff, the invitees would have been the six major conference champions and two higher-ranked at-large teams: Texas and Utah two seasons ago; TCU and Florida this past season. So, Obama's playoff would have diminished the regular season, compromised the bowls, and would not have solved anything.

In any event, it seems like a strange time to be talking about unfairness. There has been remarkably little controversy over the national title game selections since the BCS standings were streamlined after the 2003-04 season. Prior to the advent of the BCS, a small-conference team had not played in a major bowl since Air Force played Tennessee in the 1971 Sugar Bowl—a 27-year drought. Under the BCS, small-conference teams have played in six major bowls in the past six years. Last year, *two* small conference teams played in BCS bowls.

Furthermore, TCU, a small-conference team from the same conference as Utah (the Mountain West) was one second and about one foot away from playing in the title game this past season—as Texas's field-goal attempt in the Big 12 championship game slipped just inside the upright as time expired, sending the Longhorns to Pasadena. (TCU would almost surely have jumped from fourth to second because of shuffling in the computer rankings as Texas fell.) A small-conference team came within a sliver of making it onto the sport's biggest stage. *Sports Illustrated*'s preseason rankings for next season, moreover, have Boise State at number two, which already has fans talking about the possibility of the Broncos making the title game.

But Obama and Hatch want to move us to a playoff, which the Broncos, with their comparatively easy schedule, would probably have to go

Oh, the injustice: Orrin Hatch

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undefeated to make. Then they would have to win two more games versus the nation's most elite competition just to make it to the big game. This would *improve* their chances?

Maybe it's the sameness of a playoff, and its one-size-fits-all quality, that attracts Obama and Hatch. Alexis de Tocqueville lamented Americans' tendency to embrace uniformity. He loved our vibrancy and civic engagement, and he implored us not to give in to the temptation (which he thought would be fatal) to centralize power in Washington. In contrast, college football's bowl games are community-based organizations—in Tocqueville's parlance, civil associations. Go to the Rose Parade on Pasadena's Colorado Boulevard, then walk down into Arroyo Seco Canyon for the game, and it's hard not to be struck by how well the Tournament of Roses exemplifies Tocqueville's civil associations at their best.

Under the BCS, as teams jostle for higher rankings in the standings, fans in every region hang on the results from around the country as they never did before. And the BCS is more—not less—likely than a playoff to crown the most deserving team in the sport. (Nobody gets into the title game merely by getting hot for two or three weeks.) College football is close to perfect right now. And it didn't get there through central planning, but through a slow, largely organic process of development and refinement. Now the president and a few members of Congress want to get involved and change it.

Lou Holtz, a former coach and a colorful commentator on *College Football Final*, summed things up quite well:

> As a taxpayer, I have very low expectations. I don't expect our Congress to read a 1,500-page stimulus bill before they spend $787 billion we don't have. I don't expect them to read the 2,500 pages in the health bill before we spend a trillion dollars. I don't expect them to recognize how we went $1.4 trillion in debt in the last four months, but I expect them to read the 32 pages of the Constitution, and I defy you to find somewhere in there where you should be worried about the BCS system. ♦

Getting It Backwards

Obama misunderstands his constitutional role.

BY JOHN YOO

Democratic postmortems on Barack Obama's disappointing first year in the Oval Office have emphasized, as the president himself did, difficulties inherited from "the last eight years." Republicans, for their part, credit public opposition to Obama's overreaching policies. But a full explanation goes much deeper. Obama is failing because he has turned the constitutional functions of the presidency upside down.

The 2010 State of the Union address nicely summed up Obama's topsy-turvy approach to the presidency. He pressed for a new jobs bill, more domestic spending, and health care nationalization. He attributed his political setbacks not to broad opposition to his domestic ambitions but to "a deficit of trust—deep and corrosive doubts about how Washington works that have been growing for years."

National security amounted to an afterthought. He devoted one paragraph each—out of the approximately 110 paragraphs in the speech—to Iraq, Afghanistan, and terrorism. It is as if Lincoln had spent most of his Inaugural Addresses on the transcontinental railroad and the Homestead Act.

Obama believes the president should lead a revolution in society, the economy, and the political system, but defer on national security and foreign policy to the other branches of government. This upends the Framers' vision of the presidency. They thought the chief executive's powers would expand broadly to meet external challenges while playing a modest role at home.

The latest Democratic president is repeating the mistake of the first. When Thomas Jefferson entered office 210 years ago, Chief Justice John Marshall warned that Jefferson would "embody himself in the House of Representatives." This would "increase his personal power," Marshall predicted, but it would lead to the "weakening of the office of the President." The chief justice meant that his political rival (and distant cousin) would gain power by joining forces with his party's legislative majorities. But the combination would realize the Framers' fear that Congress would come to dominate the executive branch.

Marshall's observation explains much about Obama's first year. By associating himself so closely with congressional Democrats, Obama became responsible for their every misstep. Their reckless overspending and earmarks became his. Their corrupt deal to buy Senator Ben Nelson's support for nationalized health care became his sordid bargain. Their command-and-control approach to global warming, which will set nationwide limits on energy use and industrial production, became his socialist program.

Putting the president's fortune in Congress's hands not only makes for poor politics, it runs counter to the Framers' plans for the office. They saw Congress, not the presidency, as the main threat to the people's liberties. In a democracy, James Madison wrote in The Federalist, "the legislative authority, necessarily, predominates" because it has access to the "pockets of the people." He warned

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that "it is against the enterprising ambition" of Congress "that the people ought to indulge all their jealousy and exhaust all their precautions."

The Framers expected the presidency to counterbalance the "impetuous vortex" of Congress. A vigorous executive, Alexander Hamilton wrote in The Federalist, would protect against those "irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary course of justice" and provide security against "enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction, and of anarchy" which would emanate from the "humours of the legislature." The great threat to the Constitution, Hamilton wrote, was the "propensity of the legislative department to intrude upon the rights and absorb the powers of other departments" such as the executive branch, the courts, and the states. The president's veto would not only protect the executive's constitutional rights from Congress, he wrote, it would also furnish "an additional security against the enaction of improper laws" and allow the president "to guard the community against the effects of faction, precipitancy, or of any impulse unfriendly to the public good."

The initiative to regulate the domestic economy and society—limited as it originally was to have been—rested with Congress. The president was to restrain the legislature when it favored party or special interests over the public good. This was no easy job. To give it institutional backbone, the Framers clothed the presidency with independent election, consistent pay, and control over the execution of the laws. Still, Hamilton could only hope that when the legislature gave in to demagogues or temporary passions, the president would "be in a situation to dare to act his own opinion with vigor and decision." Obama has inverted the presidency in domestic affairs by transforming it from a check into a facilitator of Congress.

Obama's second and even more significant reversal of the presidency's constitutional position is his hesitance toward, and even retreat from, its core role as the protector of the nation's security.

Throughout his first year, Obama has placed the national security second to his ambitious plan to remake the American economy and society. Even as Obama delayed and delayed on whether to send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan, he retreated from his predecessor's aggressive strategy against al Qaeda. He remains intent on closing the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, despite the clear and growing evidence that released jihadists have rejoined al Qaeda and were even linked to the Christmas Day bombing attempt. He announced the end of the tough interrogation of al Qaeda leaders that had yielded crucial intelligence on their plans. He announced the transfer of the trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) and other 9/11-attack plotters from specially created military tribunals to federal court in New York. Sending KSM and the Christmas bomber into the civilian law enforcement system effectively gives the final say over terrorists to the judicial branch, not the commander in chief.

As Hamilton wrote, the presidency was to be the one part of government that could respond with "decision, activity, secrecy, and dispatch" to unforeseen crises, especially war. Borrowing liberally from John Locke, Hamilton argued in The Federalist that the central function of the executive was to be a branch of the government always in being, one that could respond swiftly to emergencies. War would make the most demands on the presidency. "Of all the cares or concerns of government," Hamilton wrote, "the direction of war most peculiarly demands those qualities which distinguish the exercise of power by a single hand."

The dependence of executive power on the circumstances was not lost on early observers of the American system. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville stated that the presidency would grow with the United States. "The President of the United States possesses almost royal prerogatives, which he has no opportunity of exercising; and the privileges that he can at present use are very circumscribed. The laws allow him to be strong, but circumstances keep him weak." That would change, Tocqueville predicted, as America became a great nation. It is in foreign relations "that the executive power of a nation finds occasion to exert its skill and its strength." If the security of the country "were perpetually threatened, if its chief interests were in daily connection with those of other powerful nations," Tocqueville continued, "the executive government would assume an increased importance in proportion to the measures expected of it and to those which it would execute."

Obama, by contrast, has operated the presidency in his first year in exactly the opposite direction. He wants the executive to be a domestic strongman who can speedily dismiss opposition to his health care and economic ambitions. His decisions to try KSM in federal court and to place the Christmas bomber in FBI custody represent an unprecedented effort to leave critical wartime decisions—here, final decisions on the disposition of enemy combatants—up to the other branches.

Obama should take a lesson from his political hero, the last truly great Democratic president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. If World War II had not come, FDR might have ended up an average president. His New Deal, we now know, did not end the Great Depression, though it did wreck his own political party. But FDR joined the pantheon of Washington and Lincoln by foreseeing and preparing for the existential threat posed by Hitler and the Axis powers. As FDR himself said, "Dr. New Deal" had to give way to "Dr. Win the War."

To save his presidency, Obama should follow the real lesson of FDR and our other great presidents and turn away from the failures of health care reform and nationalization of the economy. He will be remembered if he follows through in Iraq, pursues al Qaeda with the restoration of aggressive measures, and achieves victory in Afghanistan. If he loses in war in favor of an attempt to expand the size of government at home, he will take his place in presidential history alongside Jimmy Carter and Lyndon Johnson, rather than FDR and Ronald Reagan. ♦

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The 2007 Solution

Senator LeMieux's plan for the federal budget.

BY FRED BARNES

Republican senator George LeMieux of Florida has done the math. If government spending were reduced to its 2007 level, we'd have a balanced budget (with a $163 billion surplus). Returning to the 2008 level of spending, the budget would be balanced in 2014 (a $133 billion surplus). And in both cases, that's while keeping the Bush tax cuts across the board and indexing the loathed alternative minimum tax for inflation.

"Could we live with what we did in 2007?" LeMieux asks—the "we" a collective reference to Congress, the federal government, and the country. He thinks so. Because of the recession, "most Americans are living with less than they had in 2007."

LeMieux's ideas on curbing spending haven't gotten much attention. That's because of who he is, a 40-year-old appointed rather than elected senator filling out the final 16 months of the term of Mel Martinez, who resigned. He's not running for election this November. In fact, he's never been elected to any office. (Nor is he related to Mario Lemieux, the hockey legend.)

When LeMieux arrived in Washington last September, he was struck—appalled, really—by one thing. "You come in thinking Washington is out of control," he says. "And spending is out of control." But it's actually much worse than that. After working as chief of staff for Florida governor Charles Crist, then managing a large law firm in Ft. Lauderdale, LeMieux found the spending habits on Capitol Hill "bizarre."

"It stands in sharp contrast to what the real world is like," he says. For the state government in Florida, "the biggest thing in town" is the quarterly report of how much revenue has been collected. "We could only spend what was coming in."

Not so in Washington. "No one asks what we're taking in," LeMieux says. "And no one gauges" how much to spend based on that amount. "After a while you get used to it," he says. At least he assumes that's what occurs. LeMieux hopes that doesn't happen to him. "I haven't bought in," he says. He won't be in Washington long enough to become inured to the spending binge.

George LeMieux

When he talks to fellow senators about the need to slash spending, LeMieux thinks some of them dismiss his fervor as the result of inexperience. "He'll learn soon enough we don't do that kind of stuff here"—that's the way they regard him, LeMieux suspects. And he's probably right.

He prefers the Florida approach, which is similar to what other states do to meet their balanced budget requirement. In 2007, "storm clouds" of the looming recession began to appear. With diminishing revenue, the state could do three things: cut spending, raise taxes, or find new sources of tax revenue.

The state began to pare its budget, from $73 billion in 2006 to $70 billion in 2007 and even lower to $66.5 billion last year. As the law mandates, there was no deficit. LeMieux cites this as the opposite of the Washington practice. Estimated spending for 2010 is $3.8 trillion based on revenue of $2.2 trillion, leaving a humongous $1.6 trillion deficit.

After four months in Washington, LeMieux is willing to support "anything" to bend the spending curve. Last week, he joined Republican senators Jim DeMint and Tom Coburn in seeking a yearlong ban on earmarks, which fund special projects for individual states or congressional districts. "I've made the decision to voluntarily disarm," he says. He'll propose no earmarks for Florida.

LeMieux is convinced that earmarks are, as DeMint insists, "the engine that drives the train." A senator is bound to vote for an appropriations bill, no matter how bloated, if his earmarks are in it. "That's the way you get 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent increases in spending," he says.

A balanced budget amendment, a constitutional amendment giving the president line item veto authority, legislation to kill duplicative federal programs—the senator is for all of these. He thinks agency heads should submit annual budgets with a 5 percent cut across the board as "a healthy exercise in efficiency." "I'll bet you could cut 20 percent out of the budgets of agencies" without any loss in efficiency. Washington would scream.

But something worse could happen if Washington doesn't get a grip on its spending and debt. LeMieux mentioned it in his first speech on the Senate floor in October. "One of my greatest concerns is that one day one of my children will come to me when they are grown and say that they are moving to another country, perhaps to Ireland or Chile, because they believe the opportunities are greater than the promise and the opportunities of America," he said. ♦

NEWSCOM

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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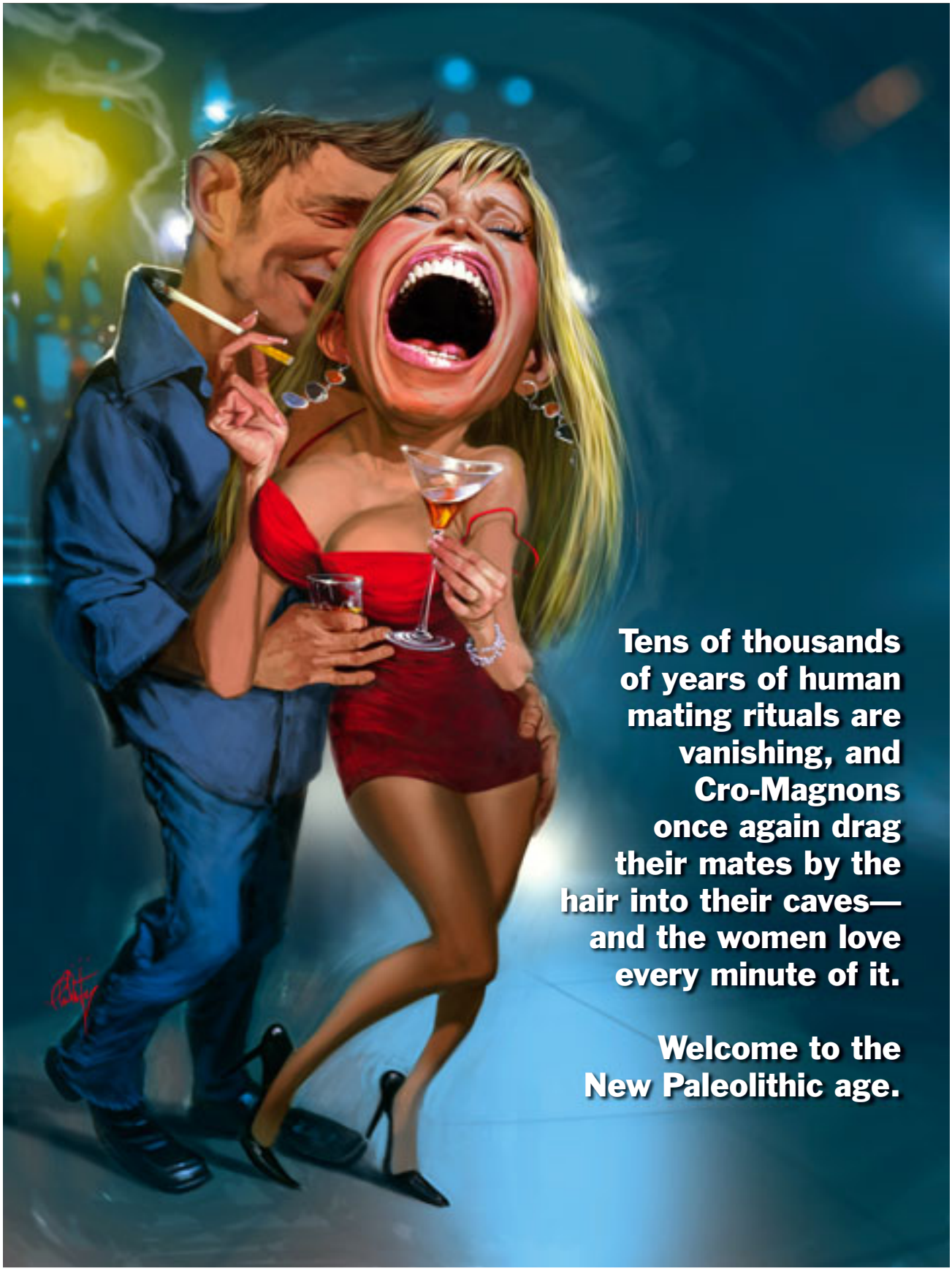

THOMAS FLUHARTY

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The New Dating Game

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Late last September a college student who called herself Courtney A. posted a story on the feminist website Lemondrop: "I Slept With Tucker Max, the Internet's Biggest Asshat."

Courtney, 21, is a student at Penn State University. Tucker Max, 33, six feet tall, extrovertedly good-looking, and usually photographed latched to a girl, a bottle of booze, or a cheeseburger, is an honors graduate (in three years) of the University of Chicago. He has a law degree from Duke University, whose admissions committee was so impressed with his academic record that it awarded him an academic scholarship. Yet his only experience practicing law to date has consisted of getting fired from a $2,400-a-week summer-associate job at a prestigious Silicon Valley firm for, among other things, showing up intoxicated at the orientation meeting and complaining that he couldn't see anything because he had lost his contacts in a hookup with a girl he had met at a party the night before; informing a female recruiter at the firm that he was "calling a porn line" when she walked into his office unexpectedly; and getting fall-down drunk at a firm retreat and shouting the F-word at a charity auction attended by the partners and their spouses. His email account of the last escapade made its way to laughs around the country.

Max is famous as a blogger (tuckermax.com), and his website is replete with stories like the ones above, all involving graphically rendered bedroom exploits (if your definition of *bedroom* includes vans, offices, and the great outdoors), massive quantities of alcohol, and copious vomiting. He is the author of several books, including *The Definitive Book of Pickup Lines* (2001, out of print but selling for close to $200 on Amazon), the 2006 blockbuster *I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell*, which spent more than 100 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, and the forthcoming *Assholes Finish First*. *Beer in Hell*, a dramatization of some of his website yarns, became an indie movie hit in college towns last fall (playing to less-than-enthusiastic audiences elsewhere).

Max and Courtney got together because upon reading a friend's text message late one Monday evening announcing that Max would be at a bar near campus after a screening of *Beer in Hell*, she jumped up, changed her clothes, and rushed off to await the great man's arrival. At the bar, she worked her way through a knot of female rivals to meet him.

"34C?" Tucker asked.

"32C," Courtney replied, "but good guess. What, are you trying to touch them or something?"

"Oh, I *know* I can touch them," he said. "But I like to guess first."

At the Hampton Inn where Max was staying, he introduced Courtney to his dog: "Say hello to the new slut." The next morning, after some sessions of "jackhammering a sidewalk," as she described his sexual technique (although she did concede that he was a "great kisser"), he handed her $20 for the taxi ride of shame back to her apartment. His last words were, "Call me if you're ever in L.A."

Many of the commenters to Courtney's tell-all expressed "disgust" at Max's manifestly unchivalrous behavior. In a September op-ed for the *Washington Post*, feminist Jaclyn Friedman, who inexplicably blamed Max's perverse success with females (half his fans, perhaps the more enthusiastic half, are female) on abstinence-only sex education, sniffed that she found his "antics revolting," blasted his "unapologetic misogyny," and accused him of contributing to a campus atmosphere that allows 150,000 young women to be raped every academic year. (Friedman derived that extraordinarily high figure by counting drunken sexual encounters between students as rape.) Amanda Marcotte, the feminist blogger briefly hired by John Edwards during his presidential campaign, chimed in, accusing Max of a "bone-deep hatred of sexual women"—and also of possible "sexual assault" because he had bragged on his website about sleeping with a drunk girl while a friend hidden in a closet filmed the encounter. In May, feminist picketers so disrupted an appearance by Max at Ohio State University that he needed a police escort to get away.

Yet it's hard to believe that Courtney A. herself shared

Charlotte Allen, a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's Minding the Campus website, is writing her doctoral dissertation in medieval and Byzantine studies.

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any of this dudgeon. Next to her story she posted a photograph of her with Max that she had a friend take at the bar. The photo shows a rosy-cheeked strawberry blonde who, although no Scarlett Johansson, is no Ugly Betty either (her C-cup bustline, much in evidence both underneath and spilling over her strapless top, doesn't hurt). She is also grinning from ear to ear, her smile as wide as a cantaloupe slice. Max, mugging for the camera, has his arm draped proprietarily, if not exactly affectionately, around her shoulder as she leans into his chest. No disapproving peers, either. When Courtney left her apartment to meet Max at the bar, her roommates called after her, "Make sure to bring him back." She and Max rode off to the inn "with everyone at the bar waving and giving the thumbs up."

Welcome to the New Paleolithic, where tens of thousands of years of human mating practices have swirled into oblivion like shampoo down the shower drain and Cro-Magnons once again drag women by the hair into their caves—and the women love every minute of it. Louts who might as well be clad in bearskins and wielding spears trample over every nicety developed over millennia to mark out a ritual of courtship as a prelude to sex: Not just marriage (that went years ago with the sexual revolution and the mass-marketing of the birth-control pill) or formal dating (the hookup culture finished that)—but amorous preliminaries and other civilities once regarded as elementary, at least among the college-educated classes.

Here is Max's seduction technique: "'So,' he asked scooting in next to me. 'Are you coming back with me tonight?'"

Here is how Courtney reacted: "Around 1:30, I told Tucker that I would, in fact, go home with him. 'Oh, I know,' he replied. 'We have a cab waiting, let's go.'"

It helps, of course, that there's currently a buyer's market in women who are up for just about anything with the right kind of cad, what with delayed marriage (the average age for a woman's first wedding is now 26, compared with 20 in 1960, according to the University of Virginia-based National Marriage Project's latest report); reliable contraception; and advances in antibiotics (no more worries about what used to be called venereal disease). No-fault divorce, moreover, has pushed the marriage-dissolution rate up to between 40 and 50 percent and swelled the single-female population with "cougars" in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and beyond. On top of it all is the feminist-driven academic and journalistic culture celebrating that yesterday's "loose" women are today's "liberated" women, able to proudly "explore their sexuality" without "getting punished for their lust," as the feminist writer Naomi Wolf put it in the *Guardian* in December.

Wolf devoted her 1997 book *Promiscuities* to trying to remove the stigma from . . . promiscuity. On the one hand, she decried the double-standard unfairness of labeling a girl who fools around with too many boys a "slut," and, on the other, she lionized "the Slut" (her capitalization) as the enviable epitome of feminist freedom and feminist transgression against puritanical social norms. Wolf's point of view is today mainstream. It's the underlying theme of Eve Ensler's girls-talk-dirty *Vagina Monologues*, performed every year on Valentine's Day on college campuses across the country. A chapter from *Promiscuities* titled "Sluts" has made so many women's studies reading lists that term-paper mills sell canned essays purporting to dissect it. A group calling itself the Women's Direct Action Collective issued a manifesto in 2007 titled *Sluts Against Rape* insisting that "a woman should have the right to be sexual in any way she chooses" and that easy availability was "a positive assertion of sexual identity." In other words, if people call you a whore because you, say, fall into bed with someone whose name you can't quite remember, that's their problem. Of course, if a man mistakes a woman being "sexual in any way she chooses" for consent to have sex, it's still rape.

The same feminist academics pooh-pooh concerns about the long-term effects of the hookup culture, arguing that it's essentially just a harmless college folly, akin to swallowing goldfish, which young women will outgrow after graduation with no lasting scars. As long as they take precautions against disease and pregnancy, the current wisdom goes, it might even be good for you: a sort of rumspringa for the non-Amish in which you get your girls-gone-wild urges out of your system before you settle down to have babies. Pepper Schwartz, a longtime sex columnist and a sociology professor at the University of Washington, told ABC News in November:

> Before, guys did this gross kind of sexual behavior, and we said, "Boys will be boys," but now it's boys and girls. . . . It's a period of flexing their muscles and they will look back and say, "Oh, God, what was I thinking?" They will have the permission I didn't have in my generation to act out, get drunk at frat parties and hook up with somebody.

Schwartz seemed unaware that booze-fueled hooking-up lasts well beyond the frat-party years. Thanks to late marriage, easy divorce, and the well-paying jobs that the feminist revolution has wrought for women, the bars, clubs, sidewalks, and subway straps of nearly every urban center in America overflow every weekend with females, young and not so young, bronzed, blonded, teeth-whitened, and dressed in the maximal cleavage and minimal skirt lengths that used to be associated with streetwalkers but nowadays is standard garb for lawyers and portfolio managers on a girls' night out. The prelude to the $50,000 wedding these days isn't just the budget-busting shower—although that's *de rigueur*—but the bachelorette party, in which the bride and her BFF's don

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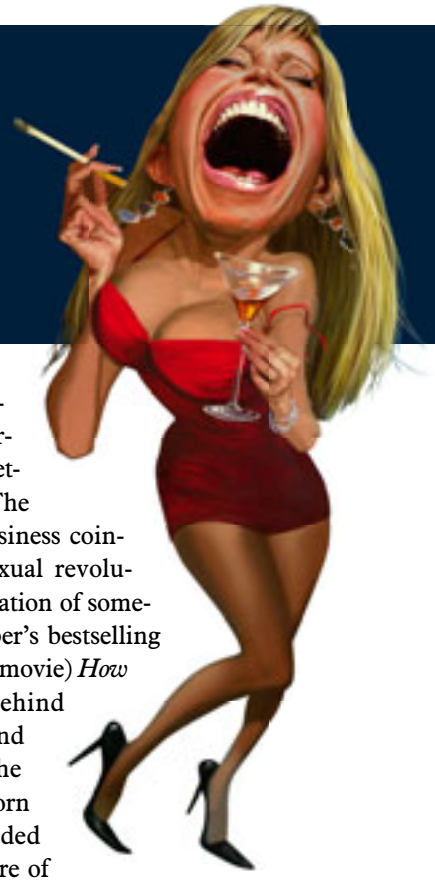
The typical female resident of Manhattan has 20 sex partners during her lifetime. The median number of lifetime sex partners for all U.S. women is just 3.3.



their skinnies and spaghetti straps and head to a bar to be hit on, sometimes bride and all, by whatever males are bold enough (the typical accoutrements of the bachelorette party are a $15 "ironic" veil for the bride and a sculpted replica of a male sex organ that's often brought to the bar).

All this takes place to a basso profundo of feminist cheerleading. Wolf's op-ed in the *Guardian* praised the uninhibited sexual "self-expression" of the four female leads in *Sex and the City*, especially the 40-something Samantha (hitting 50 in the 2008 movie), who, during the six seasons that the series ran, racked up nearly as many sex partners (41) as her three coleads combined—and Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte were no slouches themselves in the quickie department. "Did not thousands of young women . . . breathe a sigh of relief or even liberation watching Samantha down another tequila, unrepentantly ogle the sex god at the end of the bar, and get richer and more beautiful with age, with no STDs or furies pursuing her?," Wolf gushed.

Urban life, furthermore, turns out to imitate *Sex and the City*. A survey reported in the *New York Daily News* around the time of the film's release revealed that the typical female resident of Manhattan, who marries later on average than almost every other woman in the country, has 20 sex partners during her lifetime. By way of contrast, the median number of lifetime sex partners for all U.S. women ages 15 to 44 is just 3.3, according to the Census Bureau's latest statistical abstract.

As might be expected, many males would like to help themselves at this overladen buffet. But there's a problem: While it's a truism that the main beneficiaries of the sexual revolution are men, it is only some men: the Tucker Maxes, with the good looks, self-confidence, and swagger that enable them to sidle up successfully to a gaggle of well turned-out females in a crowded and anonymous club where the short-statured, the homely, the paunchy, the balding, and the sweater-clad are, if not turned away outside by the bouncer, ignominiously ignored by the busy, beautiful people within.

Out of such anxiety was born the "seduction community," part band of brothers, part nakedly commercial and ferociously competitive business enterprise. The birth of the seduction business coincided neatly with the sexual revolution: with the 1970 publication of sometime film editor Eric Weber's bestselling manual (later made into a movie) *How to Pick Up Girls*. Left behind like flares, double-knits, and dancing the Bus Stop, the art of the pickup was reborn in the 1990s and rebranded as an exact science. A cadre of guru-like leaders appeared with a set of elaborate rites, precisely defined techniques, and an acronym-laden private language known only to initiates—purposely designed to appeal to men, whose minds seem to thrive on ritual, hierarchy, and complex esoterica (think baseball statistics, Scout badges, the military, the Catholic Mass, and the Freemasons).

A UCLA graduate and former comedy writer who calls himself Ross Jeffries devised a hypnosis-based technique he calls "neuro-linguistic programming" that formed the basis of his 1992 book, *How to Get the Women You Desire Into Bed*. Jeffries pioneered the coinage of distinctive seduction lingo—his most widely used neologism: "sarging," named after his cat Sarge and meaning trolling the bars for desirable women—as well as the use of the Internet. His website, Speed Seduction, is going strong hawking CDs, DVDs, software tutorials, and personal coaching in pickup techniques. Jeffries's commercial success launched a thousand imitators: Grow Your Game, Double Your Dating, Real Social Dynamics, Alpha Seduction, Seduction Base, Seduction Chronicles, Seduction Lair, Seduction Science, Blissnosis, and so forth. All the sites, many of them with chat rooms for seeking advice and trading conquest yarns, peddle self-help books, CDs, DVDs, and other merchandise. They all feature pictures of scantily clad supermodel-like females and the same acronym-laden jargon ultimately traceable to Jeffries:

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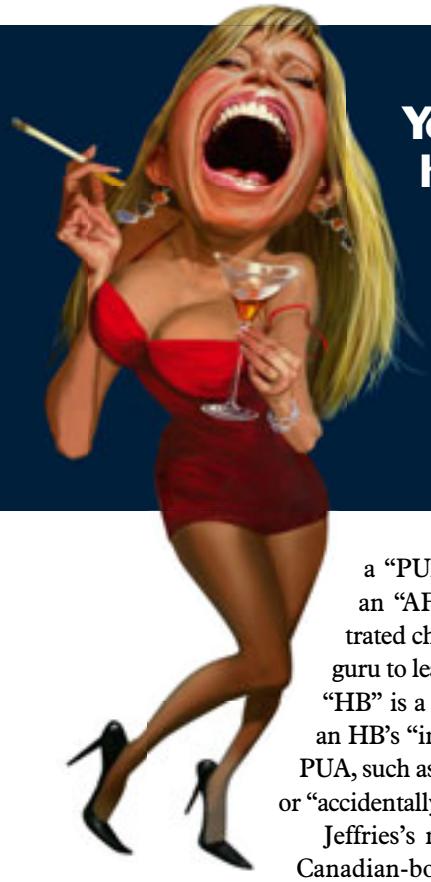

You don't buy her a drink; you offer to let her buy you one. You don't give her your phone number; you get her to give you hers. If she asks you what you do for a living, you don't mention the drone desk job that you actually hold down; you tell her you 'repair disposable razors.'

a "PUA" is a "pickup artist"; an "AFC" is an "average frustrated chump" who hasn't paid a guru to learn how to be a PUA; an "HB" is a "hot babe"; an "IOI" is an HB's "indicator of interest" in a PUA, such as leaning in his direction or "accidentally" brushing his hand.

Jeffries's most famous pupil is a Canadian-born former stage magician called Erik James Horvat-Markovic who subsequently changed his name first to Erik von Markovik and later to just plain Mystery. Most would-be pickup mentors assume new names, perhaps to signify their new identities. Ross Jeffries's real name is Paul Jeffrey Ross. David DeAngelo of Double Your Dating was born Eben Pagan. Real Social Dynamics's Tyler Durden (after the character in the 1999 movie *Fight Club*) is actually named Owen Cook. (Durden coined the phrase "chick crack" in reference to astrology, palm-reading, spells, ESP, dream-analysis, handwriting analysis, personality tests, and other New Age-y preoccupations of females that make great openers for men willing to feign interest in them.) Mystery's identity transformation was the most thorough, successful, and influential. His 2007 book, *The Mystery Method: How to Get Beautiful Women Into Bed*, is probably the most widely read of the seduction manuals, and a Mystery-hosted reality series, *The Pickup Artist*, ran for two seasons on VH1 in 2007-08 (the show's luster was somewhat diminished after it emerged that the winner of the first season's get-the-girl sweepstakes was a professional actor instead of the video-game programmer that he said he was).

Mystery also pioneered the now-widely imitated weekend-long "workshops" or "boot camps" in hotels aimed at turning AFCs into PUAs nearly overnight. Attendees are shepherded to bars for hands-on experience by master-PUA "trainers" with their own pseudonymous monickers (Captain Jack, HiRoller, Keychain, and so forth). The boot camps aren't cheap. Mystery's website, Venusian Arts, doesn't list prices, but the three-day workshops marketed by Venusian Arts's top competitor, Love Systems—run by Nick Savoy (real name Nicholas Benedict), a business partner of Mystery's until a nasty 2007 split—cost $2,997 apiece, with a $999 deposit. And buyer, beware: Although nearly all the master PUAs, including Mystery himself, insist that in their former lives they were socially hopeless geeks who had scarcely ventured within five feet of a nubile woman, many of the trainers, at least at Love Systems, have backgrounds in sales or show business and may not really resemble the introverted IT guys and cubicle nerds who seek their advice. Watching video-clips of workshops in session, with flashily attired mentors strutting and spurting acronyms in front of earnest pupils in search of arm candy will remind you of nothing so much as those all-day "Get Rich Buying Foreclosed Property for Pennies" seminars that target another male yearning.

In the late 1990s, Mystery developed a precise and exacting "algorithm" of moves and routines—pre-scripted lines to be practiced in the field—that are virtually guaranteed (according to Mystery at least) to lure a female into your bed after just seven hours in her company from a cold turkey meeting in a public place. And an ultra-good-looking female to boot. Mystery advises his readers not to bother with any female who rates lower than a 6 ("OK-looking," in his parlance) on the 1 to 10 scale, while assuring them that if they follow his advice, they can readily score a "supermodel hot" 10. The fundamental strategy is to "demonstrate higher value" (DHV, another Mystery acronym), to appear so fascinating that the woman will want to prove her worthiness to you, not the other way around. You don't buy her a drink; you offer to let her buy you one. You don't give her your phone number; you get her to give you hers,

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in what Mystery calls a "number closing." If she asks you what you do for a living, you don't mention the drone desk job that you actually hold down; you tell her you "repair disposable razors" (the choice of a Mystery disciple). You "peacock" (yet another Mystery coinage), which means donning outlandish, attention-grabbing attire. Mystery's signature peacocking wardrobe includes a black fur bucket hat and matching black nail polish and eyeliner. On *The Pickup Artist*, he sported a seemingly inexhaustible supply of exotic headgear and man-baubles.

Mystery, Savoy, and Durden were leading characters in *Rolling Stone* writer Neil Strauss's 2005 bestseller *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*. The book, packaged to look like a King James Bible with an oversize imitation-leather cover and Manga-inspired illustrations, is half self-promotion (Strauss, a self-described former dork who shaved his head, Lasiked his eyes, and took up the name Style after he joined with Mystery, runs his own web-based seduction business, Stylelife Academy) and half chronicle—a monotonous chronicle—of his nightly sarging adventures while living in a pickup-artist group house near Sunset Strip through which drifted an endless string of sordid-if-great-looking strippers, porn stars, model wannabes, and other female inhabitants of the Hollywood demimonde, including Courtney Love at the tag end of her career in between drug-rehab stays. The book's high point comes when one of the housemates persuades Paris Hilton to give him her phone number at a taco stand.

If it all sounds cheesy, tedious, manipulative, obvious, condescending to women, maybe kind of gay, it's because it is. But here's the rub: *This stuff works*. If you think men who peacock look ridiculous and unmanly, click onto the photo-website Hot Chicks With Douchebags, where spectacular-looking babes hang on the pecs of preening rednecks and "Jersey Shore"-style guidos sporting chest-baring shirts and product-stiffened fauxhawks. Watch the video "Learn Enough Guitar to Get Laid" on YouTube (three chords, max). In June 2005, Craig Malisow, a reporter for the *Houston Press*, trailed 24-year-old Bashev, a Bulgarian-born graduate student in engineering at Rice University and self-styled pickup expert, to a series of bars and clubs in Houston. Bashev had no intention of telling the 20-something HBs he met that his day job consisted of working with multivariable calculus. Instead he pointed to his shoes and informed them that he was a "foot model." Then he launched into his canned opener: Did they think reality shows were "really real"? Sure, two groups of females on whom Bashev tried that line rolled their eyes and smirked, but three bars (and the same routine) later, he was relaxing in a lounge chair reading a shapely brunette's palm (chick crack plus "kino," a Mystery-ism that refers to getting a woman to crave your touch), and soon enough "her fingers were gently grasping the backs of his wrists," Malisow observed. Within minutes, Bashev had not only number-closed but gotten a date for the following Wednesday.

Pickup mentors are relying, consciously or sub, on the principles of evolutionary psychology, which uses Darwinian theory to account for human traits and practices. Robert Wright introduced the reading public to evolutionary psychology in his 1994 book, *The Moral Animal: Why We Are the Way We Are*. He summarized what biologists had observed in the field: that among animals—and especially among our closest relatives, the great apes—males often fight each other for females and so the most dominant, or "alpha," male has access to the most desirable, and perhaps all, of the females. But it's the female of the species who ultimately makes the choice as to which member of the pack she will deem the alpha male. "Females are choosy in all the great ape species," Wright wrote. He also noted that, for example, a female gorilla will be faithful—forced into fidelity, actually—to a single dominant male, but she will willingly desert him for a rival male who impresses her with his superior dominance by fighting with her mate. That's because, as Darwin postulated, evolution isn't merely a matter of survival of the fittest but also of the replication of the fittest, "selfish genes," in the words of neo-Darwinian Richard Dawkins. Driven by instinctual desire for offspring, male primates chase fertile females so they can replicate themselves, while female primates choose strong males on the basis of survival traits to be passed on to young ones.

Evolutionary psychologists like David Buss in *The Evolution of Desire* (1994) and Geoffrey Miller in *The Mating Mind* (2000) have elaborated on these theories, arguing that the human brain itself, with its capacity for consciousness, reasoning, and artistic creation, evolved as an entertainment device for male hominids competing to impress the females in the pack. Dennis Dutton's new book, *The Art Instinct*, makes much the same argument. Evolutionary psychologists postulate that the same physical and psychological drives prevail among modern humans: Men, eager for replication, are naturally polygamous, while women are naturally monogamous—but only until a man they perceive as of higher status than their current mate comes along. Hypergamy—marrying up, or, in the absence of any constrained linkage between sex and marriage, mating up—is a more accurate description of women's natural inclinations. Long-term monogamy—one spouse for one person at one time—may be the most desirable condition for ensuring personal happiness, accumulating property, and raising children, but it is an artifact of civilization, Western civilization in particular. In the view of many evolutionary psychologists, long-term monogamy is natural for neither men nor women.

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All of this is obviously pure speculation, if imaginatively rendered and bolstered by anthropological observations of hunter-gatherer societies today. Furthermore, there is a troubling chicken-or-egg circularity in evolutionary psychology arguments: How did the female hominids know the males were trying to entertain them unless their own brains were sufficiently evolved to appreciate the effort? You can't get a gorilla to recognize Mozart or a cave painting. It's equally easy to laugh out loud at a 2007 interview Mystery gave to *Salon* in which he asserted that a woman's scratching the back of her hand when a man talks to her is an "Indicator of Interest" because "[T]hat area of the hand gets itchy when a girl is attracted to a man from ape days, you know—it means, 'Groom me.'" Yet evolutionary psychology offers a persuasive explanation for many things that we are supposed to pretend are culturally conditioned: that the natures of men and women are fundamentally different and that, *pace* Naomi Wolf and the cougar-empowerment movement, women don't get sexier as they get older, at least not in the eyes of the man sitting on the next barstool. Youth and beauty are markers of fertility. As Mystery wrote in his book, it may be sexist to say out loud, but women are well aware "that their social value can be rated largely on their looks" or they wouldn't devote so many hours to toning muscles and adjusting makeup.

Evolutionary psychology also provides support for a truth universally denied: Women crave dominant men. And it seems that where men are forbidden to dominate in a socially beneficial way—as husbands and fathers, for example—women will seek out assertive, self-confident men whose displays of power aren't so socially beneficial. This game of sexual Whack-a-Mole is played regularly these days in a culture that, starting with children's schoolbooks and moving up through films and television, targets as oppressors and mocks as bumblers the entire male sex.

It's increasingly common for women to air their husbands' perceived faults to both their friends and the general public. There is now an entire blog, My Husband Is Annoying, in which an anonymous wife and her guests post pictures of the schlubs they married and freely criticize their beards, sleeping habits, irritating questions, and dopey poses in photos. *Slate*'s Hanna Rosin called her husband a "kitchen bitch" because he had dared to cook dinner from a recipe that she wanted to try herself. The *Atlantic*'s Sandra Tsing Loh, going through a divorce because she found her husband less romantic than her adulterous lover, detailed the personal and sexual failings of her friends' spouses—in print. *New York Times* columnist Judith Warner last year wrote about a friend who told her that she wished she were Michelle Obama, married to the president instead of to her own husband, whom she was "tempted to throttle." And these are not the hardcore feminists.

Not surprisingly, given that "head of the household" is a phrase that cannot be uttered in today's egalitarian homes, many women satisfy their yearning for dominance by throwing themselves at bad boys or even worse. The very day, March 17, 2005, that Scott Peterson—sentenced to death in California for killing his wife and unborn son and throwing their remains into San Francisco Bay—took up residence on San Quentin's death row, he received three-dozen phone calls from smitten women, including an 18-year-old who wanted to become his second wife. According to an April story in *People*, Peterson is still being flooded with letters from female admirers almost five years later, many of the mash notes containing checks to pay for his commissary charges. That's par for the course on death row, where the rule is: The more notorious the killer, the more fan mail and marriage proposals. The most fan-mail-saturated killer in San Quentin is Richard Allen Davis, who in 1993 kidnapped 12-year-old Polly Klaas at knifepoint from her home in Petaluma, Calif., killed her, and buried her in a shallow grave.

Infatuation with killers is extreme and rare behavior (although perhaps not so rare as we imagine—this past summer a 16-year-old Virginia girl developed an online crush on a 20-year-old horrorcore enthusiast who called himself "Syko Sam." Syko Sam is now awaiting trial for allegedly bludgeoning the girl, her parents, and her best friend to death). But it's a fair signal of impending social chaos when the prevailing female attitude is dissatisfaction, either mild or intense, with the workaday Joes—the good-provider beta males—whom one has already married or, in the era before the sexual and feminist revolutions, would be planning to marry because chasing alphas in bars was not a respectable option for the female middle class.

Wives have historically reported less satisfaction from their marriages than husbands, but according to the National Marriage Project's latest report, their discontent is growing: fewer than 60 percent of wives report that they are "very happy" in their marriages, in contrast to more than 66 percent in 1973. (Male marital happiness has declined, too: from 70 percent to 63 percent.) "Women initiate two-thirds of divorces," W. Bradford Wilcox, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Virginia and director of the National Marriage Project, told me.

> With no-fault divorce since the 1960s, that can be divorce for no reason at all. The reasons wives divorce their husbands can be legitimate or illegitimate—adultery and abuse or lack of intimacy, growing apart, or having found someone more exciting. And because it's no-fault divorce even when there might be actual fault, the spouse left behind is often treated unjustly in dividing income and property, and frequently regarding custody of the children.

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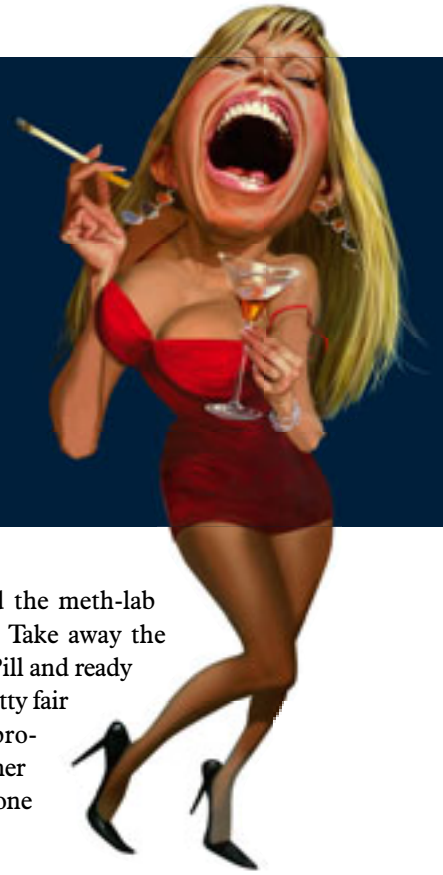

Perhaps for that reason, or perhaps because sex outside marriage is now so readily available no one need buy the cow, the percentage of married people ages 35 to 44 has declined precipitously over the last 40 years: from 88 percent of men and 87 percent of women in 1960 to 66 percent of men and 67 percent of women in 2005. Since first marriages after age 45—when a woman's fertile years are finished—are statistically rare, almost everyone who is ever going to marry is already married by that age. The percentage of children growing up in fatherless families—a chief risk factor for social pathologies—has risen concomitantly: from 9 percent of all households with children in 1960 to 26 percent today. On the plus side of the ledger, these negative trends don't affect the college-educated as severely. College-educated women have significantly higher rates of marriage and lower rates of divorce than women without college degrees. The bad news is that such women, who tend to marry late, have far fewer children. In 2004, according to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, 24 percent of women ages 40 to 44 with bachelor's degrees were childless, in contrast to 10 percent of women without a high school diploma. Marriage is slowly becoming a preserve of the elite, who pay a price in severely reduced fertility.

In *The Mating Mind*, Geoffrey Miller wrote:

> Our ancestors probably had their first sexual experiences soon after reaching sexual maturity. They would pass through a sequence of relationships of varying durations over the course of a lifetime. Some relationships might have lasted no more than a few days. . . . Many Pleistocene mothers probably had boyfriends. But each woman's boyfriend may not have been the father of any of her offspring. . . . Males may have given some food to females and their offspring, and may have defended them from other men, but . . . anthropologists now view much of this behavior more as courtship effort than paternal investment.

That's a pretty fair description of mating life today in the urban underclass and the meth-lab culture of rural America. Take away the offspring, blocked by the Pill and ready abortion, and it's also a pretty fair description of today's prolonged singles scene. In other words, we have met the Stone Age, and it is us.

Living in the New Paleolithic can be hard on women, many of whom party on merrily until they reach age 30 and then panic. "They're at the peak of their beauty in their early 20s—they're luscious—but the guys their age don't look as good, so they say to themselves: 'Why do I want to get married?,'" notes Kay Hymowitz, a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*, who is writing a book about the singles crisis. "Then they get to age 28, 29, and their fertility goes down and they're not quite so luscious. But the guys their age are starting to make money, they look better, they've got self-assurance, and they've also got the pick of the 23-year-olds."

Some argue, though, that it is actually beta men who are the greatest victims of the current mating chaos: the ones who work hard, act nice, and find themselves searching in vain for potential wives and girlfriends among the hordes of young women besotted by alphas. That is the underlying message of what is undoubtedly the most deftly written and also the darkest of the seduction-community websites, the blog Roissy in DC. Unlike his confreres, Roissy does not sell books or boot camps, and his site carries no ads. He also blogs anonymously, or at least tries to. (Purported photos of Roissy circulating on the Internet show a tall unshaven man in his late 30s with piercing blue eyes and good, if somewhat dissolute, looks.) The pseudonym Roissy derives from the chateau that was the setting

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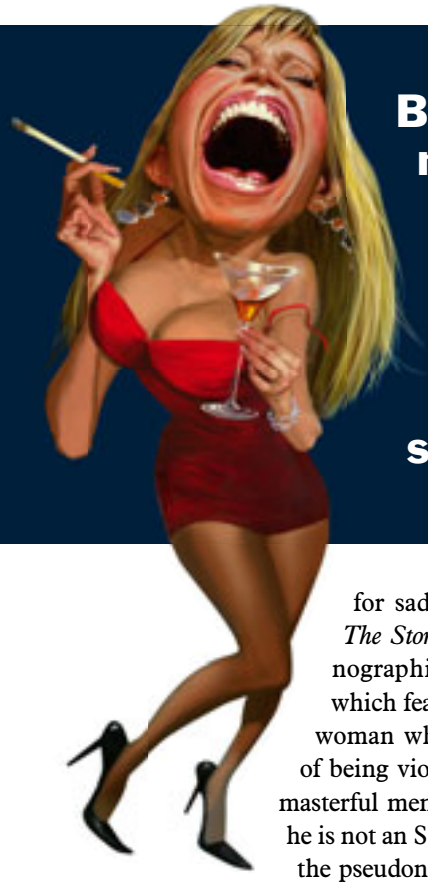

Beta men become superfluous until the newly liberated women start double-clutching after years in the serial harems of alpha males who won't 'commit,' lower their standards, and 'settle.' During this process, monogamy as a stable and civilization-maintaining social institution is shattered.

for sadomasochistic orgies in *The Story of O*, the French pornographic classic of the 1960s which featured a beautiful young woman who couldn't get enough of being violated and flagellated by masterful men. Roissy maintains that he is not an S&M-fetishist but picked the pseudonym because "chicks dig power."

His blog combines Darwinian analysis, harshly hilarious commentary about the current erotic landscape (one entry guffaws at the chin-pulling psychiatrists who diagnosed Tiger Woods's "romp through a battalion of trashy, deluded babes who thought they would be the next Mrs. Woods" as a sign that Woods needed to "get help"); graphically raw accounts (be forewarned!) of Roissy's own pickup adventures in the singles-packed neighborhoods north of Washington's Dupont Circle; features such as "Girlfriend or Fling?" in which readers look at photos of females and decide whether any of them is worth a second date, and a sense of impending social meltdown as the family crumbles and beta men are increasingly denied access to women.

His post for the last D-Day anniversary, titled "Then and Now," consisted of two photographs demonstrating women's changing perception of what constituted an alpha male: a tough and battle-weary GI circa 1944 who looked as though he had just scaled the cliffs of the Pointe du Hoc and a particularly epicene-looking Mystery from his VH1 show, "peacocking" with eyeliner, soul patch, and goggles on top of his head. Roissy's blog is an unflinching look at female nature at its very worst: the acquisitiveness, the narcissism, the self-absorption, the selfishness, the superficiality, the brainlessness, the wayward lust as powerful as any man's.

Roissy's deliberately outrageous posts are a source of controversy. In a write-up on George Sodini, the man who shot up a gym near Pittsburgh last August, killing 23 women before turning the gun on himself, Roissy contended that Sodini, whose diary revealed that he had not had sex for 20 years before the incident, was simply a frustrated beta barred access to women by the sexual/feminist revolution and that "anything was justified" to avoid the "walking death" of celibacy. In other words, Sodini was a hapless victim of the sexual revolution.

Earlier that year Roissy got into an online contretemps with Conor Friedersdorf, a frequent guest-blogger for Andrew Sullivan, over the "neg," a pickup artist tactic that involves teasing an especially attractive woman about her looks instead of complimenting them, on the theory that she probably gets so many compliments that she brushes them off. It's an updated version of Lord Chesterfield's dictum to his son that "a decided and conscious beauty looks upon every tribute paid to her beauty only as her due, but wants to shine and to be considered on the side of her understanding." Friedersdorf, however, declared that the negger's intention "is to reduce her self-esteem, or even worse to play on her insecurities with the knowledge that some women react to that technique by having sex or hooking up as a coping mechanism." Roissy responded by making fun of Friedersdorf's name.

If Roissy has anything resembling a mentor, it is F. Roger Devlin. Trained as a political philosopher—he has a doctorate from Tulane—Devlin holds no academic post, and his oeuvre, besides a published version of his doctoral thesis on Alexandre Kojève, consists of a series of essays and reviews concerning relations between the sexes for the *Occidental Quarterly*, a paleoconservative publication whose other contributors tend to focus obsessively on the question of which ethnic groups belong to which race. The dubious nature of the venue aside, Devlin deftly uses theories of evolutionary

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psychology to argue that the sexual revolution was essentially aimed at restoring primate-style hypergamy to human females and freeing women to try to capture the attention of and mate with the alpha males of their choosing instead of remaining chaste until their early marriage to a decent and hard-working beta (only the very best looking young women stood a chance of snagging an alpha in the old days).

"The sexual revolution in America was an attempt by women to realize their own [hypergamous] utopia, not that of men," Devlin wrote. Beta men become superfluous until the newly liberated women start double-clutching after years in the serial harems of alphas who won't "commit," lower their standards, and "settle." During this process, monogamy as a stable and civilization-maintaining social institution is shattered. "Monogamy is a form of sexual optimization," Devlin told me. "It allows as many people who want to get married to do so. Under monogamy, 90 percent of men find a mate at least once in their life." This isn't necessarily so anymore in today's chaotic combination of polygamy for lucky alphas, hypergamy in varying degrees for females depending on their sex appeal, and, at least in theory, large numbers of betas left without mates at all—just as it is in baboon packs. The aim of Mystery-style game is to give those betas better odds.

In a series of interviews, Devlin declined to disclose his own marital status or lack thereof. Nonetheless, in an email to me concerning the disinclination of many of today's career- and sex-chasing young women to learn, say, how to bake an apple pie to please their husbands, he wrote: "My own experience with pies is limited to buying Tastykakes at Seven-Eleven." That suggests either nonexistent or unpleasant domestic arrangements which may in turn explain why Devlin's writing about the feminist and sexual revolutions frequently shades from the refreshingly politically incorrect into the disturbingly punitive.

Devlin may be spot-on when he writes, "The female sexual revolution, as typified by Helen Gurley Brown of *Cosmo*, amounted to a program of getting women to follow all their worst instincts" or "Part of the folk wisdom of all ages and peoples has been that sexual attraction is an inadequate basis for matrimony." Yet his review of Wendy Shalit's 2007 *Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It's Not Bad to Be Good* was a merciless evisceration of an author who is on his side, at least insofar as urging her sisters toward sexual restraint and the selection of mates based on criteria other than alpha allure.

Devlin took Shalit to task for implying that young women are essentially the innocent prey of vulpine men who have taken advantage of the sexual revolution as a means of "pressuring" them to surrender their virtue and that in order for young women to recover their "self-esteem," they ought to hold out for a man who "proves his worthiness." Devlin argued, perhaps correctly, that Shalit's position amounted to a socially conservative inversion of the boilerplate feminist view of women as passive victims of evil males who "use" them, evidencing a blindness to women's responsibility for their all-too-frequent complicity in the seduction scenarios that both feminists and social conservatives decry. *Girls Gone Mild*, obviously pitched to a youthful readership and couched in a upbeat women's magazine tone, might have come across as simplistic and overly romanticizing of a fragile-flower female sex. Yet Devlin was so unwilling to give Shalit any quarter—and so eager to heap 100 percent of the blame on women for the current sexual chaos—that he went so far as to declare, "Men do not have to prove their worthiness to anybody." Really? *Anybody?*

The word *misogyny* does come to mind here (men get a free pass but women don't). Nonetheless, his writings—and those of many of the self-styled alpha bloggers who have taken up his theories—can also be read as *cris de coeur*. Underlying the bravado is a deep and understandable anger on the part of many men at having to live through the sexual and familial wreckage of the New Paleolithic.

A Washington, D.C., player-blogger who calls himself Roosh (you can subscribe to his Game Tips Newsletter: "7 Tips for Incredible First Dates," "How to Pick Up Girls in Coffee Shops," etc.) put up a post in November that he titled "Single Women Who Purposely Have Children Are Committing Crimes Against Humanity." It was essentially a lament about Roosh's own childhood growing up without a father at home:

> My parents divorced when I was 8, and for the next twelve years or so I visited my dad two nights a week. So when I got out of college, I was only 30% man. . . . Unfortunately many guys have been raised by their fathers but they might as well be fatherless—their dads didn't teach them s—, sometimes because they didn't quite know how to be a man themselves. This has happened because Western society has not demanded that men act like men.

The comments section to that post was an echo chamber of rage and sadness: "My dad was largely absent from my upbringing—he was a checkbook, not a presence." "My dad was an alpha, and due to his philandering my parents divorced when I was 5. I never saw my dad once after that." Not surprisingly, the "seduction community," at least as it manifests itself in blog comments on seduction websites, skews heavily toward divorced men still furious at their ex-wives and single young men whose experience with absent or feminism-cowed fathers, or with young women who have not deemed them sufficiently exciting, has made them cynical about all relationships with the opposite sex.

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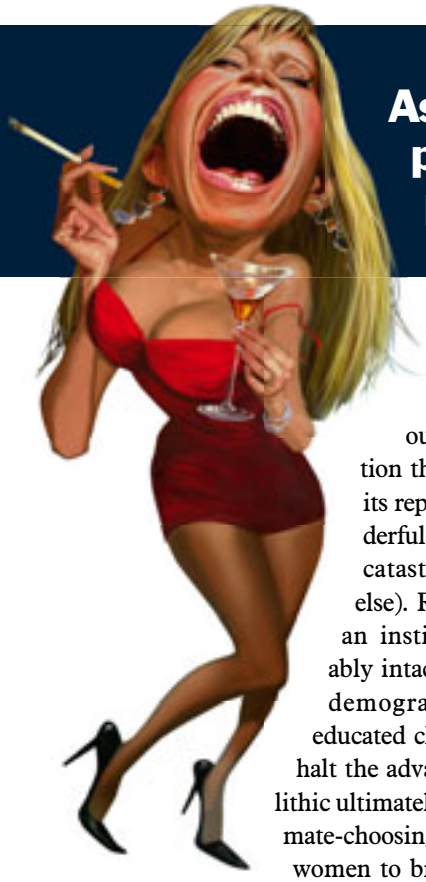

As Roissy acknowledged in one of his posts, 'The best way to get a man to propose marriage is to be a virgin.'

Roissy often writes of a coming "apocalypse," a thorough collapse of civilization thanks to the stalling of its reproductive matrix (wonderful for him as a sensualist, catastrophic for everyone else). Right now marriage as an institution is still reasonably intact—but mostly for the demographically shrinking educated classes. The decision to halt the advance of the New Paleolithic ultimately lies with women, the mate-choosing sex, just as it lay with women to bring the hypergamous sexual revolution into being. What are the chances of that? "Women have been told for so long that it doesn't matter what they do [sexually]," one of Roissy's regular commenters, an Ottawa historian who goes by the online name of Alias Clio, said in a telephone interview. "I don't think [the female sexual free-for-all] has been good for women, but it's what they've chosen. And it's always hard for women to see beyond the personal level."

Roissy himself, although arguably the most jaded of all the seduction bloggers, is actually a closet moralist who longs for the more constrained past when women dressed modestly ("Girlfriend or Fling?" is all about the kind of clothing and bearing that mark a girl as a "pump-and-dump"), refrained from swearing like sailors, stayed out of men's beds (except his!), and generally conducted themselves like wife-and-mother material (although he says he has no intention of getting married himself).

"The best way to get a man to propose marriage is to be a virgin," Roissy wrote in one of his posts. As a poster child for everything that has gone wrong with the monogamy-based family structure that underlay the flourishing of the West, Roissy singled out one of his regular female commenters, a 28-year-old former bar dancer who calls herself Lady Raine and who on her MySpace page posted photos of herself in derriere- and tattoo-revealing attire alongside a photo of the 6-year-old son she bore out of wedlock to an alcoholic ne'er-do-well. Besides reposting the photos, Roissy taunted Lady Raine as "Single Mom" and told her that her son, whose sole exposure to adult men seemed to be her parade of boyfriends, would likely grow up either gay or a sociopath. (In retaliation, Lady Raine outed Roissy, posting his name and place of employment on her own blog—although Roissy maintained in an email to me that it was all an "experiment" in "identity borrowing.")

The whole point of the sexual and feminist revolutions was to obliterate the sexual double standard that supposedly stood in the way of ultimate female freedom. The twin revolutions obliterated much more, but the double standard has reemerged in a harsher, crueler form: wreaking havoc on beta men and on beta women, too, who, as the declining marriage rate indicates, have trouble finding and securing long-term mates in a supply-saturated short-term sexual marketplace. Gorgeous alpha women fare fine—for a few years until the younger competition comes of age. But no woman, alpha or beta, seems able to escape the atavistic preference of men both alpha and beta for ladylike and virginal wives (the Darwinist explanation is that those traits are predictors of marital fidelity, assuring men that the offspring that their spouses bear are theirs, too). And every aspect of New Paleolithic mating culture discourages the sexual restraint once imposed on both sexes that constituted a firm foundation for both family life and civilization.

A week after Courtney A. posted her story about her one-night stand with Tucker Max, he posted a surprisingly kind and courteous response that also happened to make it clear what young women need to do:

> Courtney, I know you're only 21, so that explains a lot, but baby, please understand: We all reap what we sow. . . . I'm sure there are a lot of guys who will be sweet and gentle with you in bed and really pay attention to your needs, but the guys you come out to sport f— probably won't be among them. . . . I told her I wanted to eventually settle down and have kids. I do. Maybe not now, but soon enough that I think about it now. Of course, traveling around the country f—ing all kinds of college girls who throw themselves at me probably doesn't help.

No, it probably doesn't. ♦

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The Disarming of America

The outlook for our armed forces under Obama: not good

By Thomas Donnelly

In the cover story in the latest issue of *Foreign Policy*, Walter Russell Mead argues that Barack Obama's foreign policy should be understood as a channeling of Thomas Jefferson via Jimmy Carter. The cover picture makes the point more bluntly. It shows two men linked by a boldface equals sign: Barack Obama = Jimmy Carter.

The president's supporters understand that this is not a compliment. But more important than any faculty-lounge fight over differing interpretations of Obama's foreign policy is the actual course of Obama's defense policy. The simultaneous release on February 1 of the president's 2011 budget and the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review revealed the essentially Jeffersonian-cum-Carterite nature of this administration's approach to the world; the only thing missing is a return to gunboats and coastal fortifications. The several narrower defense reviews to come—on missile defense, space, and nuclear weapons—will fill in the outlines drawn by the budget and the QDR.

Obama's neo-Jeffersonian defense posture would reduce the profile of U.S. military power. To do this, the administration has only to let nature take its course: The U.S. armed forces have been shortchanged since the end of the Cold War. George W. Bush may have been a hawk, but he was a cheap hawk, and only in the wake of the decision to surge forces in Iraq in 2007 did he ask Congress to increase the size of the military, adding a mere 37,000 soldiers to the active rolls of the Army. Bill Clinton before him reaped a bounteous "peace dividend," making the largest of the post-Cold War reductions.

But the defense review and budget proposal suggest that the Obama administration wants to limit future American military "adventurism" by limiting our capabilities. The president is looking to eliminate the last vestiges of the Reagan-era buildup. Once the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are "ended" (not "won"), the arms control treaties signed, and defense budgets held at historic lows while social entitlements and debt service rise to near-European levels, the era of American superpower will have passed. Mead summarized Obama's Jeffersonian approach neatly:

> Obama seeks a quiet world in order to focus his efforts on domestic reform—and to create conditions that would allow him to dismantle some of the national security state inherited from the Cold War and given new life and vigor after 9/11. Preferring disarmament agreements to military buildups and hoping to substitute regional balance-of-power arrangements for massive unilateral U.S. force commitments all over the globe, the president wishes ultimately for an orderly world in which burdens are shared and the military power of the United States is a less prominent feature on the international scene.

Because the president has yet to articulate a formal national security strategy, the defense review is the clearest statement we have of his inward-looking orientation. The QDR's formulation of "America's global role" is telling: "America's interests are inextricably linked to the integrity and resilience of the international system." This stands American strategic culture on its head; past presidents saw that the integrity of the international system depended upon the resilience of American power. But in the Obama view, international politics is not a competition for power, but an exercise in cooperation. As the review puts it, we "advance our interests by reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of all nations."

This is an intellectual justification for allowing the U.S. military to continue to atrophy. America's armed forces are significantly smaller than they need to be, and the major weapons systems they operate were fielded in the Reagan years. In 1990, the U.S. Army had 780,000 soldiers on active duty and operated the "Big Five" weapons systems: the M1 Abrams tank, the M2 Bradley fighting vehicle, the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the UH-60 Black Hawk troop transport helicopter, and the Patriot

Thomas Donnelly is director of the Center for Defense Studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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air defense missile. Twenty years later the Army is only 70 percent as big; it can't meet its commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan without mobilizing about 100,000 National Guard and Army reservists. It operates the same Big Five, having failed five times to field a replacement ground combat vehicle, twice to field a new howitzer, and once to introduce a new armed scout chopper. Tens of billions invested in research have yielded very little procurement, except the Stryker wheeled vehicle and the Mine-Resistant, Ambush-Protected "MRAP" monster trucks that may not be very useful after Iraq.

The Navy has fallen to less than half of the 600-ship peak of the late 1980s. The Obama administration has slowed the pace of aircraft carrier production, which would be a bigger problem except that the Navy doesn't have enough planes to fill up the decks it has. The Navy is also suffering a serious identity crisis. It should be responding to the rapidly growing capabilities of the Chinese Navy, particularly the massive number of submarines and land-based missiles that pose an imminent and lethal threat to U.S. carriers and surface combatants. But instead of preparing to rule the sea lanes of the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean—where a huge proportion of international shipping passes through several chokepoints—the Navy prepares itself for tsunami relief and the suppression of piracy. There's nothing wrong with providing relief (imagine Haiti without the U.S. Navy) or repelling boarders, but those aren't the primary missions for a "blue-water" navy.

The notion that we 'advance our interests by reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of all nations' is an intellectual justification for allowing the U.S. military to continue to atrophy.

The Air Force also is developing a split personality. It is coming to embrace its small-war role, particularly when it comes to unmanned systems like the Predator. But in almost every other respect, the service has fallen on hard times. The 1990s, the time of Operation Desert Storm and the Kosovo war, look in retrospect like the golden age of airpower. The future looks like a nightmare. The Obama administration's decision in last year's budget to terminate the F-22 Raptor program, combined with technological and program-management problems with the F-35, raises previously unthinkable questions about the American ability to assert air superiority in a modern air defense environment. Another lethal combination—corrupt procurement officials and congressional efforts at procurement "reform"—has delayed by almost a decade the Air Force's replacement of its 40-year-old tanker fleet. The current budget contains, at last, some funding for a new bomber to replace the B-2 and the old B-52, but the money is only for studies; a new bomber, be it manned or unmanned, is decades off.

At least the QDR does not shy from recognizing that "first and foremost, the United States is a nation at war." But this makes its fundamental failing all the more apparent: The review ducks the basic question of defense planning, How much is enough?

That's a first. There have been four previous QDRs, if you include the 1993 "Bottom-Up" Review, and while each answered the question slightly differently, each at least gave the services basic guidance. And each defined a specific force-sizing construct, most often built around a variant of the traditional "two-war standard," the idea that the U.S. military, with its global responsibilities, needed to be able to conduct at least two large-scale operations at the same time.

Perhaps not surprisingly for an Obama administration product, this review prefers nuance and complexity to clarity and simplicity. In place of a force-sizing construct, it offers a force-sizing philosophy. The philosophy itself isn't wrong, just vague. Rather than winning two wars, the military must "aggregate capacity" to "balance risks" across four "priorities." In the Pentagon, the philosophy is known as the "Four Ps":

• *Prevail in today's wars.* It's hard to argue with this, and indeed Defense Secretary Robert Gates has been stalwart in focusing on "winning the wars we're in," spurring the Pentagon to buy much-needed gear like the MRAP even though it is unlikely to be a long-term asset. And to his credit, President Obama has committed to a "surge"—even going so far as to use that term, with its Bush-era connotations—in Afghanistan, to the great consternation of his leftwing base. On the other hand, the administration's commitment to Iraq does not clearly extend beyond making a graceful withdrawal of "combat" forces. But the real question is whether prevailing in the many campaigns in the "Long War" for the future of the greater Middle East requires further adjusting our long-term defense plans, not just continuing to fight with the force we have. It was not until the Iraq surge in 2007 that the Bush administration agreed to a 10 percent increase in the size of the Army. Even though, because of the Afghanistan surge, the number of troops deployed is greater now than in 2007, the QDR reinforces the Obama administration's decision to limit force size and structure.

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• *Prevent and deter conflict*. Again, this is hardly controversial; it's been the central priority of past QDRs. But past reviews considered deterrence to be based on U.S. military supremacy, sending a don't-even-think-about-it signal to potential adversaries. The Obama administration believes that

> advanc[ing] common interests without resort to arms is a hallmark of [America's] stewardship of the international system. Preventing the rise of threats to U.S. interests requires the integrated use of diplomacy, development, and defense, along with intelligence, law enforcement, and economic tools of statecraft, to help build the capacity of partners to maintain and promote stability.

Setting aside this potted interpretation of American "stewardship of the international system"—as though our role were more akin to managing a nature preserve than to waging World War II and the Cold War—this is strange guidance to give defense planners. The mission appears to be to work well with others, be they agencies of the U.S. government or players abroad. The message is that military power isn't so special. Granted, this is an administration addicted to "soft power." But the Pentagon is in the hard-power business.

• *Prepare to defeat adversaries and succeed in a wide range of contingencies*. This is arguably the most difficult task facing the U.S. military. Today's force is small, but it's been able to prevail—and prevail rapidly and decisively in conventional operations—because of its technological edge. Fortunately, the failure to build a new generation of systems hasn't yet had the worst consequences; al Qaeda and the insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan are inventive, but they're making the most of very limited tools. Other potential adversaries, from Hezbollah to Iran or China, would be just as innovative but would employ more modern weaponry—precise missiles in large numbers; air defenses lethal to "fourth generation" aircraft like the F-15, F-16, and F-18; and quiet submarines. In China's case, a conflict would likely begin in space and cyberspace.

With its embrace of "defense transformation," the Bush administration tried to turn "skipping a generation of procurement" from a necessity to a virtue. To its credit, the current QDR slips the traditional two-war standard into its prescription for the future. And it rightly argues that "the future operational landscape could also portend significant long-duration air and maritime campaigns." But as the Obama budgets have made plain, the generation-skipping is far from over. That the level of defense spending is the same as during the Bush administration is not really something to boast about.

• *Preserve and enhance the All-Volunteer Force.* The current QDR, like its predecessors, talks about "taking care of our people," meaning the people of the armed forces and their families. In the ninth year of the post-9/11 war, that's with good reason: Seldom have so few done so much for so long. Students of the American military used to wonder how the All-Volunteer Force would fare when tested by a fight that wasn't quick and decisive. Now we know that it's amazingly resilient, and we'd better hope we can keep it so.

The QDR promises that "our preserve-and-enhance efforts will focus on transitioning to sustainable rotation rates that protect the force's long-term health." But achieving sustainable rotation rates was an argument against the Iraq surge in 2007; the Afghanistan surge will also make it impossible to lighten the deployment load. In other words, the "prevail" imperative takes precedence over the "preserve" impulse.

More broadly, there is an inherent tension among the Four Ps. The QDR's "defense strategy" is self-contradictory. It fails to do what strategy is supposed to do: set priorities.

The offense is compounded by the QDR's assertion that the way out of the conundrum is to "balance" or "manage" risk, as though charting strategy were like keeping a stock portfolio sound. Thus, the review concludes with an extended analysis of the kinds of risk the Defense Department faces: operational risk in current conflicts; "force management" risk to the force; institutional risk, including the increasingly tenuous health of the defense industry; and "future challenges" risk as the U.S. technology edge erodes. But the section ends with an optimistic assessment. The Defense Department, it says, "is positioned to successfully balance overarching strategic, military and political risk between the near to midterm and the mid- to long term, as well as across the full range of military missions required to protect and advance national interests."

The assertion would carry more weight if the QDR described how this balancing act would be performed. But even if it did, the measure of strategy, and the purpose of defense planning, is to make sure the level of risk is acceptable, not to keep it balanced. It's the amount of risk that really matters, not the distribution.

A Jeffersonian approach to military power made some sense when America's primary strategic interest was westward expansion, and the country could build its trade surplus under the sheltering sails of the Royal Navy—although that reliance nearly cost the young republic its life during the War of 1812. Walter Russell Mead tempers his critique by imagining that there's a tension between the president's come-home-America impulses and his occasional endorsement of a more energetic liberal internationalism. But then, American exceptionalism without American muscle is the very definition of Jeffersonianism. ♦

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Master in Depth

The multidimensional Makoto Fujimura

BY DAVID GELERNTER

In a small but magisterial show that stopped in Paris and then (late last year) at the Dillon Gallery in Manhattan, Makoto Fujimura emerged as a major artist, one of the dozen-odd most compelling painters at work today. Fujimura is a Christian who paints within the Nihonga tradition of a limited palette of natural pigments; his brooding, soaring abstractions often rhapsodize on religious themes. His paintings were interspersed at the show with pieces by Georges Rouault (1871-1958), whose Christian images fit almost as badly into pre-World War II Paris as Fujimura's do in modern New York. The exhibit has closed, but the Dillon Gallery continues to show Fujimura's work, and a small catalog called *Rouault Fujimura Soliloquies* is available from the gallery.

At their best, Fujimura's new paintings have the depth of the night sky, and seem to blend as you study them into a sort of cosmos. Most of these new paintings make striking use of gold leaf. Gold for gilding is ordinarily prepared and sold in small squares, several inches on a side. Fujimura uses the squares themselves as a motif. Often he assembles them into grids aligned with the edges of the painting; sometimes the squares balance on point, or coalesce into secondary grids at odd angles to the main one. The sheer gold leaves are caught at a moment of flutter, as if in a mild breeze. Sometimes they dissolve into powder and become as translucent as ancient cloth. Fujimura exercises impressive control over translucence: We see a black void through a golden grid, or square leaves superimposed on one another three or four deep. Fujimura's golden grids of fluttering leaves give these paintings the lapping rhythm, the serene and fascinating aliveness of gentle waves in a large, deep harbor.

'Soliloquies-Joy' (2009)

MAKOTO FUJIMURA

His colors collect into clouds with a slightly gritty feel, like sparkling tiny ice crystals; color-nebulae drift sometimes in front and sometimes behind the planes of gold. Scanning the cosmos of these pictures you spot a lovely pale cerulean blue made bright by surrounding gold; a vermilion turned hot and luminous by the cool brown underneath; a pale gold on salmon pink, a turquoise over cobalt blue—subtle and lovely color-chords.

One large painting includes several lines of biblical text in tiny loopy letters running like a golden flute-trill across the surface; but otherwise the pictures are pure abstract. They resemble the color-field paintings of a Morris Louis

David Gelernter's Judaism: A Way of Being, *published late last year, is illustrated with his paintings.*

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or Helen Frankenthaler, or the work of Gerhard Richter, more than the gestural abstraction built around eloquent brushstrokes in which the greatest abstract painters spoke. But Fujimura's gold, his characteristic palette, and the spiritual depth he builds out of his drifting color-clouds make these paintings original and powerful.

Depth of field is a rare quality in abstract art. Abstraction emerged, after all, when the rear plane of the picture-space (like the back wall of a giant aquarium), having moved steadily forward over half-a-century, finally collided with the front plane—leaving a flat field to be decorated rather than a volume to be filled. This gradual squashing of the picture-space was evident in Manet and urged forward by the startling, nose-pressed-to-the-glass immediacy of van Gogh and Cezanne. The cubists were left with staved-in, flattened figures inhabiting the narrowest of gaps, and the conclusion was inevitable. Most abstract paintings are accordingly flat—but Fujimura gives us a surface with a vast space opening behind it. In this respect he brings Mark Rothko to mind, and the Jackson Pollock of *The Deep* (1953)—an atypical and stunning painting.

Garden-variety abstract painters give the impression of having hit on some pattern almost at random and then pressed it into service as their own trademark style. Then they repeat themselves like a child persevering until you give up and look. Fujimura is one of those rare and superior abstract painters whose visual language seems as natural, inevitable, and uncontrived as his own speaking voice. His paintings speak of his personality like the surface of a pool expressing the motion of a deep-gliding swimmer. The artist who emerges in these paintings is a man of spiritual depth and impeccable taste, and the visual language he speaks is enchanting.

One admires the paintings all the more for the strict rules Fujimura has set himself. Nihonga calls for a limited range of binders and natural pigments—sometimes based on powdered minerals or semiprecious stones. Fujimura's pigments all seem to be opaque; translucence and lightening are achieved by controlling pigment densities, and overlapping rather than blending colors. A powerful personality operating within strict limits has produced much of the greatest art we have: Bach's sublime achievement in (say) the *Art of Fugue*, and in the even more restrictive *passacaglia* or (equivalently) *chaconne* forms; Beethoven's in the fugues of the gloria and credo of the *Missa Solemnis*, or the variation-form last movement of the final piano sonata. And so on. But important art must surprise us as well—without trying; not by PR hucksterism.

It is fair to speak of ideas conveyed by paintings only in the special sense in which ideas are conveyed by Bach fugues. A painter does not use images to convey thoughts; his thoughts are images. Successful art makes a direct sensual appeal.

(If your art is not inherently surprising there is nothing you can do about it, any more than you can make yourself be inspired or fall asleep.)

Fujimura does surprise us. And a significant artist must drive his language as hard and far as it will go, and then burst that barrier and go farther. Think of the coda of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, or the closing theme of the first movement of his final piano sonata, or the end of the *Grosse Fuge*. Will the Nihonga technique Fujimura has chosen give him enough breathing room to surprise us repeatedly, and go farther and farther as his art evolves? There's no telling. But we can say that Fujimura is a major artist, and his paintings are serenely beautiful.

You won't have read much about Fujimura in the art world's prestige press: a hopeful sign. The establishment (now and forever) is incapable of recognizing important new art—although it is doomed, Sisyphus-like, to try and fail again and again. Often its attempts are honest, and once in a while they even succeed. More often the reigning experts make themselves ridiculous, and wind up with such P.T. Barnum-style masterpieces as Damien Hirst's shark carcass slowly rotting in translucent blue jello (or whatever the stuff is) now wowing visitors at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

But in the modern art world, the relative neglect of such masters as Fujimura is more complicated than the old story of the pompous Academy *versus* the rebellious outsiders. Only a couple of generations ago, the official New York art world had achieved the marvelous state of recognizing great contemporary art and enforcing no style or party line. That idyll was celebrated at the Met 40 years ago in the epochal *New York Painting and Sculpture 1940-1970* exhibit—a show that marked the end of an era with the urgent brilliance of a dying, frying light bulb. (In some ways it resembled the 1939-40 New York World's Fair.) But why did the idyll die? Can it ever be re-created?

Look back at that exhibit and you see the sky blaze as the sun sinks. Inevitably the show was dominated by de Kooning: As the 20th century falls back, we see de Kooning, Matisse, and Giacometti emerge as its presiding geniuses. But the Met's show included great art by a strikingly varied and original group: Edward Hopper's powerful realism, Stuart Davis's jazz cubism, the profound and moving microcosms of Joseph Cornell, along with other abstract expressionist masters, and the brilliant pop draftsmanship of Jasper Johns—and for good measure, the wit of Claes Oldenburg, among other important artists.

What happened to that movingly brilliant art world? Art for its own sake has always been an irresistibly juicy peach of a target to ideologues and

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intellectuals. By the 1970s the established museums, newspapers, and universities, fresh from the triumphs of the Cultural Revolution, had an agreed political message to deliver. And the Academy had always been uneasy about art as an end in itself rather than a delivery truck for ideas. The 1960s, '70s, '80s saw the dark blossoming of "conceptual art," which usually amounted to snide and bitter political message-flaunting, as primitive as Socialist Realism. "Conceptual art" equals "conceptual cupcakes" equals nonsense. Cupcakes don't exist to convey concepts. You can hear the characteristic false note of modern art-talk in the first sentence of an (otherwise fine) essay on the Wilton Diptych, published by London's National Gallery in 1993: "Who could have devised the complex interplay of ideas which makes the Wilton Diptych so intriguing?" (The late 14th-century diptych shows Richard II and patron saints addressed by the Virgin and Child and a crowd of angels.)

But "the complex interplay of ideas" does *not* make this piece so intriguing. It is intriguing because of its sensual appeal: because of its drawing, colors, and the rich, superfinely knit textures of its intricate patterns and counterpatterns. They give this small diptych the intensity of a spot-lit diamond, and make it commandingly lovely.

It is fair to speak of ideas conveyed by paintings only in the special sense in which ideas are conveyed by Bach fugues. A painter does not use images to convey thoughts; his thoughts *are* images. Successful art makes a direct sensual appeal. In his famous, century-old essay on the Florentine painters of the Renaissance, Bernard Berenson wrote of "the heightening of vitality which comes to us whenever we keenly realize life." That is what art seeks, and what great art achieves.

Fujimura's thought takes the form of images that, at their best, are deep and captivating. Those who are unwilling to be moved by sensual appeal will see nothing in them. And many of today's reigning art-intellectuals fall into this category. But for the rest of us—call us "art lovers" for short—these paintings are a revelation. ♦

B&A

Marriage à la Mode

Why the cake remains an essential ingredient.

BY CHARLOTTE HAYS

The wedding of Tiny Tim and Miss Vicki, December 17, 1969

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Why a "surprisingly" dignified wedding? Well, because weddings—unlike funerals, which are impromptu by nature and therefore less likely to become vulgar extravaganzas—have come to resemble Oscar night performances rather than mere gatherings of friends and family to witness and celebrate an important moment in a couple's life.

This points to another way in which funerals are superior to weddings: A funeral is forever, a wedding is not. The decline of marriage, ironically, has been a boon for wedding planners: The bride may not be married forever, so why not make a day of it? Miss Manners notes that the contemporary bride thinks of her wedding as "my day" and is likely to demand a limousine ("there is no polite word for distinguishing pretentious automobiles from ordinary ones"), insist upon a dozen bridesmaids in hideous dresses of her devising, and devise a theme right out of Hollywood.

Miss Manners's Guide to a Surprisingly Dignified Wedding
by Jacobina Martin and Judith Martin
Norton, 320 pp., $24.95

Bad ideas all: "Don't worry about developing a 'theme' for your wedding," cautions Miss Manners. "The theme of a wedding is marriage."

Many brides would disagree. A syndicated etiquette columnist, Miss Manners reveals that she frequently has received distraught missives from brides-to-be saying that they can't afford the wedding of their dreams unless they hit up the guests to contribute, often referring to something called "a money tree." To one bride-to-be who wonders about the proper way to say "no presents" and ask for cash instead, Miss Manners

Charlotte Hays is coauthor of Southern ladies' guides to hosting perfect weddings and funerals.

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suggests: "Never mind all that junk—just gimme your wallet." This would come under the heading of "one of the perversions of hospitality being practiced at modern weddings that would make your hair curl." Miss Manners would prefer you to start with a list of people who matter to you and then decide what you might be able to offer them in the way of refreshments.

As an antidote to the unfortunate modern attitude that a wedding is "a one-chance excursion into a fantasy of royalty, film stardom, or childhood fantasies that wrecks not only your budget but your emotions," Miss Manners (Judith Martin and her coauthor/daughter Jacobina Martin) put forward a novel proposal: Invite only people who might actually care about you, treat them as guests, not extras, and stay within your means. As a longtime advocate of lime punch, cheese straws, and mints, with champagne if affordable, and wedding cake, especially for little girls who attend weddings mostly for the cake, I found this most gratifying and highly proper.

I was also thrilled that Miss Manners comes down hard on an odious new custom that treats us as oafs who don't give a hoot about inconveniencing others: the reply card. When my sister's eldest child got married, in (where else?) California, my mother made one request: There must be no reply cards for any of the Mississippians on the guest list. My mother insisted, correctly as it turned out, that we may be backward, but at least we are kind enough to reply to a wedding invitation. "Guests ought to be insulted by response cards," Miss Manners writes. And of course, rude people are just as likely to ignore the card, often pre-stamped, as their obligation to sit down immediately and write a response.

While staying away from religion, Miss Manners regards traditional ritual as better than the do-it-yourself, TMI wedding ceremony so prevalent today:

> Why, instead of drawing on the power of the ritual, do officiants as well as bridal couples now use the wedding ceremony to summarize the love story, roll the credits, and supply biographical material?

You have only to read the *New York Times* Sunday wedding columns to know that this boring and self-glorifying custom has spread like kudzu. Good friends already know, and strangers don't care.

Although Miss Manners describes herself as a "finicky crank," I occasionally wished she had been crankier: She addressed all of the things that drive me wild but often too fleetingly for the dimmer bride to fully appreciate. She did (ahem!) remind us that it is incorrect to congratulate the bride—it is a chivalrous fiction, even today, to assume that the groom is the lucky party—but I wish she'd hit this a bit harder. She might also have done more to snuff out the hideous "unity candle," particularly ridiculous when the couple already is visibly pre-unified.

Miss Manners might have done well to be more dictatorial about the hour at which it is right to don a dinner jacket. Couples who want to do the right thing but don't know, and therefore end up having wedding parties that look as if they have rounded up not their friends but tux-wearing waiters from nearby restaurants, might actually appreciate more emphasis on this matter than a photo caption. But Miss Manners concentrates on general principles, and there is a dire need for such insights as are offered here, often hilariously presented. (I laughed out loud over the guest who wanted to bring a pet monkey. Miss Manners advised against it.)

This is a wise and witty book, and every bridezilla and her mother should be forced to read, honor, and obey it. Until such time as this happens, I shall prefer funerals to weddings. ♦

B&A

Man vs. Machine

The intellectual legacy of Arthur Koestler.

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

According to Iain Hamilton, his first biographer, Arthur Koestler was a man of "disquieting intellectual passion," which led to an "alarming readiness to deal with many of the disagreeable aspects of the age which had not yet impinged fully on the English consciousness."

Koestler
The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic
by Michael Scammell
Random House, 720 pp., $35

Not only Englishmen were disturbed by Koestler. His searing novel *Darkness at Noon* (1940) exposed the moral depravity of communism at a time when many in the West were still enraptured with the Soviet experiment. Portraying an individual enmeshed in the Stalinist purges and show trials of the 1930s—deeply imbuing them, as one admirer put it, with "the smell and taste of blood"—it was among the first and most powerful shots fired in the Cold War. The French edition, entitled *Le Zéro et l'Infini*, had a devastating effect on the postwar fortunes of the French Communist party.

In the late 1940s Koestler was practically a one-man crusade against the continuing Soviet threat, with further novels, political essays, and other anti-Communist advocacy. He was a major mover behind the Congress for Cultural Freedom conference in Berlin in 1950. His indictment of communism was all the more convincing since he was not only an intensely readable writer but had also served in the ranks of the party. As George Orwell wrote, leftwingers wanted to be antifascist but not antitotalitarian. Perhaps it was the bitter battles with his intellectual

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cohort—fellow travelers in England and France (Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir) or New York liberals (he intuitively grasped Whittaker Chambers's innocence)—that led Koestler to give up political writing in the 1950s. "The bitter passion has burnt itself out," he wrote in *The Trail of the Dinosaur* (1955). "Cassandra has gone hoarse, and is due for a vocational change." Turning to science and social anthropology, here, too, Koestler was ahead of the curve of contemporary interests, and equally passionate. With works like *The Sleepwalkers* (1959), *The Act of Creation* (1964), and *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967), his cultural impact continued to be great.

It has been noted that his political and nonpolitical writing deals with the same enemy: closed intellectual systems that, for some purported good, reduce the individual to "higher" ends, whether those of the state, the organism, or the species. Nonetheless, many of the subjects Koestler pursued—parapsychology, in particular—had earlier admirers scratching their heads. When Koestler, debilitated by Parkinson's disease and leukemia, died a suicide in 1983, his importance was widely acknowledged; but it is not surprising that a man whose writings encompassed Palestine, the Bolshevik mind, the pusillanimity of French intellectuals, the mind-body split, telepathy, the nature of artistic and scientific creativity, Eastern mysticism, Jewish assimilation, hanging, and euthanasia would have his detractors.

The absolute plunge in Koestler's reputation since his death, however, was indicated by the absence of any major commemoration in 2005 on the centenary of his birth. It is not simply the case that Koestler addressed specific historical events that no longer resonate. Just the opposite. The decline in his reputation is a function of the continuing reign of political commissars against whom Koestler directed his disquieting passion.

This claim requires a little background, both of Koestler and of the complex genesis of this new biography.

Arthur Koestler was born into an assimilated Jewish family (spelling its name Köstler) in 1905 in Budapest, when that city was part of the Hapsburg empire. The two volumes of his autobiography record his uncanny ability to be present at some of the signal political events of the 20th century. He witnessed the celebration of Hungarian independence in 1919 and, six months later, the hundred-day Communist dictatorship of Béla Kún. While a student of engineering in Vienna in the early '20s he came under the influence of the Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky and traveled to Palestine. Though his kibbutz labors were unsuccessful and his Zionist enthusiasms shortlived, the four years he spent in the Middle East marked the start of his career in journalism. Returning to Europe in 1929, on the eve of the Great Depression, he worked in Paris for the Ullstein newspapers. He arrived in Berlin, as a science journalist for Ullstein, on the day of the 1930 Reichstag elections.

Like many intellectuals in the early 1930s, Koestler saw in the Soviet Union the model of the future, became a member of the Communist party, and traveled to the promised land at the height of the forced collectivization. Ignoring the appalling evidence of mass starvation, he penned a laudatory account. Unable to return to Germany, he next worked hand-in-glove with Willi Münzenberg in Paris on Popular Front activities, went to Spain during the Civil War (again to serve the Soviets' plans for political domination of Western European governments), was imprisoned and nearly executed. His release was orchestrated by the Münzenberg circle. Two years later he returned to France on the eve of the fall to the Germans, and was interned in a French concentration camp for six months (an experience chronicled in *Scum of the Earth* in 1941). By then he had renounced his party membership and begun the writings that would blight, if not kill, the romance of Western intellectuals with communism.

It is not surprising that, over the course of such a peripatetic, eventful life, the brilliant, complicated Koestler would also manage to fascinate and seduce many women who were remarkable in their own right. And it is this aspect of his life that has had such a negative effect on his reputation, and also compromised this new biography. Around 1985 Michael Scammell was asked by the Koestler estate to write an authorized biography and was given unrestricted access to the Koestler archives at the University of Edinburgh. According to Scammell, because of other commitments he did not begin the project until the end of 1988, five years after Koestler's death. By this time David Cesarani, a British scholar, had received permission to access the archives for research on a book about Koestler's Jewishness; the result was *Arthur Koestler: The Homeless Mind* (1998). Julian Barnes, in the *New York Review of Books*, accused Cesarani of "tomb-robbing," of unauthorized use of "a previously uncontaminated archive" by broadening his project (as per Cesarani's preface) into "an account of Koestler the man and his achievements as a whole." In other words, an unauthorized biography.

What most exercised Barnes was Cesarani's portrayal of Koestler as a serial abuser of women; indeed, as "a serial rapist." Cesarani's most damaging evidence was the claim of filmmaker Jill Craigie—wife of the British Labour leader Michael Foot, who had once written that Koestler was the greatest foreign novelist in English since Joseph Conrad—that she had been raped by Koestler in 1952 after a day of pub crawling. This revelation became journalistic fodder, and in short order, a bronze bust of Koestler on display at the University of Edinburgh was removed because female students felt "uneasy" after learning that Koestler (according to a BBC news report) had "beaten and raped several women." Michael Foot seems to have been gobsmacked when Craigie began to spread the tale in 1995, after which he dutifully backed up his wife. The charge has since taken on a life of its own. Carl Rollyson's 2005 biography of Craigie repeats the rape accusation, adding further details to Cesarani's account.

Unlike Whoopi Goldberg, I would not hazard a guess as to whether this was a "rape-rape." There seems to have been something pathological about Koestler's desire for sexual conquest, but the brutal attack recounted by Cesarani is different and also (so it seems to me) out of character for Koestler. It is hard to judge

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from this distance whether Koestler's womanizing represented a particularly egregious example of the sexual philandering of the *bien-pensant* class at mid-century, and earlier. It is known that he refused to have children, and the number of abortions he seems to have forced on his wives and other long-term partners makes for sickening reading.

In Koestler's defense, however, we have to be suspicious of the source of the charge. Jill Craigie was a lifelong socialist, as was Michael Foot, an experienced streetfighter whose Labour manifesto in 1983 has been called "the longest suicide note in history." In contrast, Koestler had met and even admired Margaret Thatcher. Craigie was also a feminist, and her story fits into a narrative that has become familiar since 1976, when Virginia Woolf's autobiographical account, "Sketch of the Past," first appeared in print. Writing in 1939 Woolf accused one of her half-brothers of sexual molestation. Feminists have simply run with this accusation, even though Nigel Nicolson (among others) warned that Woolf's claims were far-fetched. For feminists, however, truth is beside the point: Sexual abuse is simply too good a tool with which to bash conservatives, upholders of the so-called patriarchal order, or to punish apostates like Koestler. After all, statues and portraits of Sartre and Bertolt Brecht, notorious serial abusers, still stand in prominent places without objections from sensitive female students.

Julian Barnes ended his evisceration of Cesarani by lamenting the spoiling effect his book would have on Scammell's authorized biography which, according to Barnes, would appear in 2001. Well, here we are, at the beginning of 2010, and *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic* has finally seen the light of day. Scammell is a translator and the author of a well-received biography of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, but the ghost of Cesarani hovers over this volume. In his epilogue Scammell discusses the decline in Koestler's reputation and wonders about the impact not only of his suicide but also that of his younger wife. By this he means not simply the ethical issue of whether Koestler should have sought to prevent the suicide of the apparently healthy Cynthia—since her death vitiated Koestler's advocacy of suicide as an honorable way of leaving the world—but whether, had Cynthia lived on, she might have protected and shepherded Koestler's legacy, as had Sonia Orwell (or, in another case, Leonard Woolf).

Arthur Koestler, 1947

PAT ENGLISH / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

I suspect that Scammell is somewhat uneasy about his role in the mixed-up fortunes of Koestler's afterlife. He is also in the unenviable position of writing about a man whose own record of his experiences and opinions makes for thrilling reading. Though Scammell writes fluently, a chronicle that runs to over 600 pages, with a year-by-year accounting of people, places, and events, necessarily squeezes the juice out of Koestler's life. Such fact-filled modern biographies tend to reduce the stature of their subjects to more ordinary dimensions; still, Scammell does justice to the fullness of Koestler's activities. He has also drawn on many sources, including Koestler's prescient journalism from Palestine in the 1920s. Many books now support Koestler's accounts, or fill out the range of his activities, whether it is Soviet justice, Palestine, or the interesting figure of Willi Münzenberg. And Scammell ably defends Koestler against the rape charge. (We learn, for example, that Craigie and Foot attended Koestler's 70th birthday party in 1975.)

Still, it must be asked whether most readers under 35 know what the Popular Front was all about, have heard of *The God That Failed*, or even recognize the erstwhile implications of the term "bourgeois." The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the Comintern, and the like march by in quick succession. What gets lost is a larger picture, particularly of the intellectual heritage that spawned the 20th century's ideological mudslinging. David Cesarani claimed that Koestler belongs "in the great tradition of Enlightenment Jews from Solomon Maimon, Heine to Freud," which led to such dubious assertions as this: "Koestler's homelessness, beginning with his estrangement from Jewish tradition, may explain his confused personal morality as much as the legendary virility of the Hungarian male." Scammell eschews the Jewish angle—indeed, any particular angle at all.

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If the number of books still in print is any indication, Koestler lives. Clearly, a new approach to this fascinating and provocative figure is required, one that would bring the two halves of his writing life together. Koestler himself thought he was a walking contradiction, struggling between ideals of action and contemplation, and the titles of some of his works bear this out: *The Yogi and the Commissar*, *The Lotus and the Robot*, *Arrival and Departure*. But such antitheses are not just personal to Koestler but are very much part of the Western intellectual inheritance. Koestler's animus against the rigid net of rational explanation is prefigured in Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* and in the writings of the German Romantics. He stopped writing in German with *Darkness at Noon* and he may have lost sight of this background when writing *Arrow in the Blue* (1952), the first volume of his autobiography. But there may be another reason for Koestler's failure to connect himself and his work to a larger German tradition, the one that produced not only Goethe but also Marx. Koestler was unusual among Central European intellectuals in not being a product of the classical *Gymnasium* or the traditional university. In high school he was on a science track, and later studied engineering at the University of Vienna, which made him a first-rate science explicator but which may also have obscured for him the extent of the influence of European humanism. Koestler's rejection of a state for Jews in Israel had much to do with the Hebrew language which, he believed, cut Jews off from the European cultural past.

"Skeptic" is not what I would call Arthur Koestler. He was often pessimistic, because he believed humans possessed an aberrant gene that would lead us to destruction. Yet he never gave up fighting for what he believed would be improvements in the human lot: He even endowed a fund for prisoner art, still thriving in England as the Koestler Trust. His major legacy was to warn us of the commissars, a warning no less urgent today than when *Darkness at Noon* was published 70 years ago. ♦

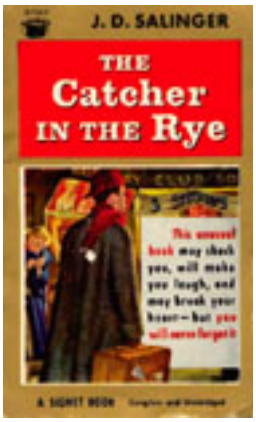
B&A

Scourge of Phonies

The teenage perspective of J.D. Salinger, 1919-2010.

BY BARTON SWAIM

Driving home from work one night last week, I heard somebody on the radio talking about *The Catcher in the Rye*. I guessed—correctly as it turned out—that the author had died. What I couldn't remember, momentarily, was whether his name was J.D. Salinger or Holden Caulfield.



Like millions of other adolescents, I was obliged to read Salinger's famous novel at precisely the age it might have done the most harm: 16. Fortunately, I hated it. I didn't know why I hated it, exactly. Partly it had to do with the sort of boys (it was only boys) who liked it. One or two of them, as I remember, had some high-minded critical reasons to argue for its greatness. Of course, they wouldn't have used an unironic term such as "great" to describe any book, especially one that had been assigned to them in an English class; but it was apparent *The Catcher in the Rye* had moved them in some way.

At the time, I assumed its appeal was based mainly on the fact that Holden Caulfield—the aimless and alienated narrator who escapes from boarding school and wanders the streets of Manhattan for several nights—used words such as "knockers" and "goddam" and drank and smoked himself into a daze. There was something thrilling about being *told* to read such a book for a class.

But there was more to its appeal than that. Even I admitted that it was funny, and when you're a 16-year-old boy, funniness is everything. "All of a sudden, I did something I shouldn't have," Holden says at one point, in the middle of a fight with a girlfriend. "I laughed. And I have one of those very loud, stupid laughs. I mean if I ever sat behind myself in a movie or something, I'd probably lean over and tell myself to please shut up."

Holden's is a kind of foursquare humor, but when I read the book again last weekend, I found myself laughing at the same lines. And there's something perceptive about it, too—perceptive in some clumsy, unclever way that grabs your attention. "It's a funny thing about girls," says Holden. "Every time you mention some guy that's strictly a bastard—very mean, or very conceited and all—and when you mention it to the girl, she'll tell you he has an inferiority complex. Maybe he *has*, but that still doesn't keep him from being a bastard, in my opinion."

There's something impressive, too, in Salinger's ability to mimic the sound of a teenaged boy's language. Everything is exaggerated with random numbers: People tell him things "about eighty-five times," a play is "about five hundred thousand years in the life of one old couple." He restates his own insignificant observations, and even if they're plainly false or exaggerated, he declares: "I'm not kidding." He uses profanity precisely where it doesn't belong. The narrative is soaked with bad grammar and the stupid verbiage of youth culture ("I like Jesus and all. . . . It depressed the holy hell out of me . . . she's always very well-dressed and

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has lipstick on and all that crap").

As a mimic, Salinger was Ring Lardner's equal. The sound and texture of Holden Caulfield's meandering narrative comes as close to the real thing as it's possible to come. That's what gives the book its power over the minds of emotionally raw young people. To say that *The Catcher in the Rye* is a powerful book, however, isn't to say that it's a good one. As it is commonly read and taught, anyhow, it's actually a thoroughly bad one.

By calling it "bad" I don't mean that it confirms teenaged boys in their self-absorption and moral laziness—although there's a pretty good argument to be made that it does. High-school English teachers assign *Catcher* because it "speaks" to young people, or because they "connect" with it. That's true; it does and they do—sometimes. But one suspects that it's not the kind of "connection" these teachers intend, or ought to intend.

Writes Ian Hamilton, in his splendid book about Salinger:

> I remember that for many months after reading *The Catcher* at the age of seventeen I went around being Holden Caulfield. I carried his book everywhere with me as a kind of talisman. It seemed to me funnier, more touching, and more *right* about the way things were than anything else I'd ever read. . . . *The Catcher* was the book that taught me what I ought already to have known: that literature can speak *for* you, not just to you. . . . It was something of a setback when I eventually found out that I was perhaps the millionth adolescent to have felt this way.

Somehow I doubt that my sophomore English teacher—Sandy, as she allowed herself to be called by students—meant for the boys in her class to conclude that Holden Caulfield was "*right* about the way things were." He finds everything irritating and preposterous that isn't somehow convenient or pleasing to him at the moment, he takes for granted the importance of his banal observations, and the worth he assigns to other people has strictly to do with his petty and ever-changing likes and dislikes. All these vices may be pretty common in boys of a certain age—although only rarely are they all present in the same boy at the same time—but whether we need to invest them with the authority of Literature is a question worth asking.

In any case, the really corrosive thing about *The Catcher in the Rye*—at least to the extent that it speaks *for* its reader as opposed to upending that reader's view of the world—is its narrator's laughably shallow moral outlook. What's always made the book so exciting to young people, especially to those who find the workings of society around them bewildering and arbitrary, is its honesty. Holden Caulfield is "authentic," to use a cultural buzzword that once strangled the imaginations of young people like some parasitical plant.

There's something impressive, too, in Salinger's ability to mimic the sound of a teenaged boy's language. Everything is exaggerated with random numbers. . . . He uses profanity precisely where it doesn't belong.

His favorite epithet is "phony." He denounces everything that has a trace of "phoniness" about it, which of course includes just about everything and everyone. "It's full of phonies," he says of a school from which he was ejected, "and all you do is study so that you can learn enough to be smart enough to be able to buy a goddam Cadillac some day." The sum total of his morality amounts to little more than a rejection of "phoniness." He thinks that he is the first person to notice that saying "Glad to've met you" to people doesn't mean you were actually glad to have met them.

He remembers his headmaster with particular scorn:

> He'd be charming as hell and all. Except if some boy had little old funny-looking parents. You should've seen the way he did with my roommate's parents. I mean if a boy's mother was sort of fat or corny-looking or something, and if somebody's father was one of those guys that wear those suits with very big shoulders and corny black-and-white shoes, then old Haas would just shake hands with them and give them a phony smile and then he'd go talk, for maybe a half an *hour*, with somebody else's parents. I can't stand that stuff. It drives me crazy.

The trouble with people who hate phoniness, of course, is that they are just as phony as the people whose phoniness they hate. If authenticity becomes your lodestar, you'll seem anything but authentic. Even Holden's sloppy grammar and teenaged diction look affected after 200 pages. After all, he's curiously insistent—or should we speak of Salinger rather than his creation?—that he's a widely read young man. He's read Dickens, Hardy, Somerset Maugham, and Isak Dinesen. His roommate gets him to write his English composition for him. You don't get to be an "ace composition writer," as one former teacher calls him, by using bad grammar and writing "and all" after every adjective and describing everything you don't like as "depressing as hell."

In short, it's a put-on. All the vulgar bravado, all the inveighing against "phony bastards," is a conveniently *faux* philosophy for a kid who's too lazy and self-important to admit, even to himself, that life's not one great crime just because some things in it piss him off.

J.D. Salinger was among the most famous recluses in American literary history. He published no other novel, nothing at all since 1965, and relentlessly battled anyone who tried to republish his work or adapt it for film. I've sometimes wondered whether he saw something culpably ludicrous in the way schoolteachers, always desperate to convince pupils of literature's "relevance," force his book on the very people least capable of understanding its meaning. If that happened to a book of mine, I know *I'd* become a recluse. I'm not kidding. ♦

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B&A

Winnie-the-Pooh II

Eeyore is wrong: You can go home again.

BY MICHAEL TAUBE

When I first heard that a new Winnie-the-Pooh story was in the works, I immediately felt two emotions. The first was sheer jubilation. Having enjoyed the original A. A. Milne tales as a child, I couldn't wait to see Pooh and his friends end an 80-year period of hibernation. The second was mild trepidation. When authors are afforded opportunities to continue popular fiction stories, the results have been mixed. There have been successes—Geraldine McCaughrean's *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006)—and there have been less-than-equal sequels, most notably Alexandra Ripley's *Scarlett*, the 1991 follow-up to *Gone With The Wind*.

Return to the Hundred Acre Wood
by David Benedictus,
illustrated by Mark Burgess
Dutton Juvenile, 160 pp., $19.99

Lottie the Otter

Fortunately, David Benedictus has adapted Winnie-the-Pooh stories into audio book format, and concocted a marvelous little volume that Milne would have been proud of. To his credit, he remains true to the original story line, preserved the characters' unique traits and personalities, and brilliantly replicates Milne's formula of silliness and zaniness. And while Benedictus has obviously added his own deft touch, including a new character, the continuity between his writing style and Milne's is clear and well appreciated.

Time appears to have stood still for the honey-loving bear and his pals. That is, until a big Rumour spreads through the Hundred Acre Wood: Christopher Robin is coming back. Pooh and Piglet excitedly pass on the news to Eeyore. Meanwhile, Owl and Rabbit attempt to sort out if the Rumour is true. Kanga says that it's true, while Tigger hops around, of no use to anyone. The result?

> And so, if Pooh and Piglet thought that it was true, and Owl believed that it was true, and Kanga said that it was true, then it really must be true. Musn't it?

Of course, Christopher Robin does come back into their lives. He's a bit older now, riding a bright blue bicycle (with no helmet, reckless child that he is) and bearing presents for everyone. Yet it's quickly evident his love for the Hundred Acre Wood has never diminished: He will see his woodland friends during the summer, especially the bear who dreams of honey and mutters the word "bother."

From this point on, *Return to the Hundred Acre Wood* picks up where the last Milne/Pooh story, *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928), left off. Pooh and his friends have innumerable exciting and fun adventures in the land of milk and honey. Owl's attempt to complete a crossword puzzle leads to a grand spelling bee in which all participants are "welcum." Rabbit gathers information in the Forest for a census—or, as Piglet points out, "It's not a Census, it's a Nonsensus." Pooh searches high and low for honey ("I can only think of honey, and having none") in one chapter, and Owl becomes—and mercifully stops being—an author in another one. Christopher Robin attempts to teach them cricket, and the mysterious heffalump is mentioned again and again.

And there is a new character, Lottie the Otter. After decades of male bonding it seems to have dawned on Benedictus that it might be time to add a second female protagonist. She joins the cast in the fourth chapter: a "Silver-and-Silky Slinky Thing" with confidence, charm, a savage wit, and the ability to play music on her "mouth organ." Although it's risky to introduce a new character in an established series, this turns out to be an excellent idea. Lottie is a perfect fit among these animal misfits and adds an intriguing dynamic for readers.

And just who will read this book? It's hard to say. As the Hundred Acre Wood returns to life, opinions will vary. Some will simply refuse to read Benedictus's sequel, believing that, when A. A. Milne died, the sequence died with him. Others, having suffered through Walt Disney's animated version, could take a pass on this current reincarnation. Still others, who couldn't understand the Latin version, *Winnie Ille Pu* (1958), may fear that a Sanskrit or Esperanto edition is on the way.

Most skeptics will be pleasantly surprised by *Return to the Hundred Acre Wood*. As a traditionalist who is pro-Piglet, I can say with confidence that this is a worthy successor to Milne's body of work. With each passing word, sentence, paragraph, and page, Benedictus preserves tradition and builds an exciting new legacy for coming generations of readers. Which goes to show that old bees can, at times, produce new honey. ♦

Michael Taube is a journalist and former speechwriter for Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

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B&A

Apocalypse Then

Francis Ford Coppola's descent into journalism.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Three years ago an unusual volume was issued by Crown Books. It was signed by Cathie Black, president of Hearst Magazines, and titled *Basic Black: The Essential Guide for Getting Ahead at Work (and in Life)*. Presented as a chronicle of how one woman broke through the glass ceiling to attain eminence in her career, it appeared to be an extravagant exercise in vanity publishing. Inspired, perhaps unconsciously, by the luxuriant fantasies and journalistic misadventures of William Randolph Hearst himself, the volume was distinctive in its design, as well as its notably disarrayed content.

Cathie Black is known mainly for her work at women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Marie Claire*, *Town & Country*, and even *O*. So one might assume that the glass ceiling is more resistant to fracture than suggested. But Black also boasts executive experience with *New York* and, in the book's jacket copy, "is widely credited with the success of *USA Today*," where she was president and publisher for eight years beginning in 1983.

Basic Black was some kind of success. In 2009 I found that it had been translated and published in, of all places, Bosnia-Herzegovina. But for me, its most interesting element was a set of throwaway lines, left unelucidated. Thirty-five years ago Cathie Black was employed in advertising sales at *Ms*. in New York when she heard that Francis Ford Coppola was about "to launch a new magazine in San Francisco"—not quite a correct report, as will be explained. After 25 pages, she announces that, within three months of moving to the Bay Area, she "could already tell [Coppola's] magazine wasn't going to survive." Eight weeks later she went on a skiing vacation and, while away, was informed that "the magazine had been shut down, with only a note posted at the entrance telling employees that the last issue had been printed, and they didn't have jobs anymore."

The liquidation of a publication without notice might seem an excellent lesson for someone with a future at the Hearst Corporation; but more peculiarly, Black never mentions the name of Coppola's magazine—*City of San Francisco*—or its weekly frequency, or its flamboyant but ingenious editor, Warren Hinckle III. These lacunae could be blamed on poor editing; but as a former staff writer at *City*—as it was universally known—I know a different version of the Coppola saga.

Cathie Black blames the collapse on an inability to generate readership, advertising, or profits. Yet Coppola's *City* was anything but a circulation flop; its boldly designed, oversized issues flew off the newsstands. Further, ad sales and profits were irrelevant because *City* was a vanity effort for Coppola. He had just gotten extremely rich off the first two *Godfather* films and had yet to embark on his longer financial and artistic rollercoaster ride. He would soon shower cash on such pictures as *Apocalypse Now* and *The Cotton Club*, but also on such best-forgotten projects as *One From the Heart* (1982) and *Tucker: The Man and His Dream* (1988).

In 1974, when the magazine came into view as his new toy, he was the monarch of San Francisco's de facto statelet, and Coppola's *City* seemed intended as something akin to a single-party organ in a totalitarian society. He resented the established San Francisco media for what he perceived as their slights of his grand conceptions, and he voiced his desire to buy the main local paper and "fire everybody." Coppola's ambitions have always had their own Hearst-like aspects. He did not launch *City of San Francisco*; he took over a smaller and more modest weekly, *City Magazine*. But he imagined himself as a parallel to the communications magnate depicted in *Citizen Kane*, remarking to one crony, as he swept through the offices of the reorganized magazine, "It's fun running a newspaper, Jedediah"—a reference to the sidekick, portrayed by Joseph Cotten, of Orson Welles's fictional protagonist.

Like Charles Foster Kane, Francis Ford Coppola seemed consumed by a sense of inadequacy and self-doubt, barely hidden under an expansive personality. He was said to be jealous of his not-so-well-known older brother August, a professor of comparative literature and father of Nicolas Cage. (Cage had fled the advantages of association with his uncle by changing his surname.) Francis Ford Coppola long appeared obsessive about flattering, and involving in his projects, San Francisco's local celebrities, much as any potentate would confer favors on selected cultural personalities. These included the actor Sterling Hayden, who played the corrupt police captain shot by Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*; the late rock promoter Bill Graham, and the late Michael Smuin, a ballet showman prominent in San Francisco in those days.

Coppola took inordinate pleasure in doling out attention to this band of petty notables. But he also craved their approval, and idealized San Francisco as a city of poets—contrasting it with Los Angeles and the hard-headed studio elite. He grinned like a clown in the presence of Lawrence Ferlinghetti. But he acted similarly when dealing with Hollywood. His casting of Marlon Brando, Robert DeNiro, and Al Pacino as incarnations of the Corleone crime

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family was unarguably brilliant. But he also turned his representation of the real-life Meyer Lansky into Hyman Roth, played by the acting teacher Lee Strasberg in *The Godfather II*. Strasberg had nurtured Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Paul Newman, and others, and Coppola seemed to possess a need to outdo Strasberg by recasting the great drama coach as an actor.

The same anxieties seemed obvious in Coppola's recruitment of family members (such as his sister, the *Godfather* black widow Talia Shire) and old college friends, some of them notably eccentric, in his creative enterprises. But as much as Coppola talked about wanting to meet poets and encourage new writers, he was ill at ease and resentful when deprived of adulation, and found the rambunctious, aspiring versifiers of San Francisco distasteful and irritating. He was, and remains, a promoter of his family and clique rather than a discoverer of genuine talent.

When *City of San Francisco* was founded, Coppola began the enterprise by reviving the career of the Depression-era screenwriter John Fante, gushing over the opportunity to publish a Fante novel, *Brotherhood of the Grape*. And at the same time as he resuscitated Fante he called on all Bay Area writers to submit articles. The magazine was swamped with thousands of manuscripts. Many unfortunates believed that entry into *City* would lead to, say, a movie job; but alongside Cathie Black only a few people benefited from involvement with *City*. Coppola's curious form of communitarianism in soliciting contributors anticipated the current era, in which standards and achievements in journalism and criticism are often set aside in the interest of improvised observation. But when *City of San Francisco* sank, few of the region's denizens blamed Coppola's ego or publishing economics; instead, they blamed its editor, Warren Hinckle.

Warren Hinckle III had become famous as editor of the leftist monthly *Ramparts*, but while he exploited anti-American conspiracy theories and allied nonsense to sell magazines, he was no ideologue. *Ramparts* had something in common with Coppola's *City*, in that Hinckle had taken over a Catholic literary journal and transformed it. But Hinckle, whose restlessness and raptures made Coppola appear monastic, has always seemed concerned mainly to establish himself in the annals of San Francisco lore, perhaps as a successor to Ambrose Bierce.

Hinckle made *City* controversial and readable, but he came to the magazine some time after Coppola's makeover. His incompatibility with the time-servers (exemplified by Cathie Black), and his free hand with Coppola's money, undercut his ambitions. The magazine's staff split almost as soon as Hinckle arrived, divided between those interested in flattering Coppola and those who wished to produce an actual magazine, if only a museum of faded sixties radicals with a frantic method of assembly. Coppola's fans obstructed its production by capriciously removing telephones, stalling payments for writers, and otherwise borrowing from the methods of sabotage employed by producers to obstruct film projects. You could take Coppola out of Hollywood, but you could not take Hollywood out of Coppola.

Finally, Hinckle submitted to Coppola and purged the writers he had recruited to work with him, installing the leftist demagogue Robert Scheer, a Hinckle accomplice from *Ramparts* days, as hatchet man. Scheer began his tenure by publicly (and without irony) comparing Coppola with Fidel Castro; but behind the backs of Coppola and Scheer, Hinckle continued commissioning and encouraging original work.

The experiment, however, was about to end.

More than three decades have passed since the fleeting incidents here recounted. At the time Coppola's reign over San Francisco's cultural circus seemed a new and rich chapter in California's pageant of nonconformity, but we now know it was something else: the tail-end of sixties' radical culture. Parallel with Cathie Black, another *City* veteran, Susan Lyne, went on to found *Premiere* magazine and served as president of ABC Entertainment. (She was later chief executive officer of the Martha Stewart empire, until 2008.) Susan Berman, daughter of Las Vegas gangster (and Bugsy Siegel successor) Davey Berman, worked previously as a feature writer for Hearst newspapers and published several books until she was mysteriously shot to death in Los Angeles 10 years ago.

A number of the men who passed through *City* graduated to work for Larry Flynt. Warren Hinckle continued writing books while serving as a reporter and columnist for various San Francisco dailies and weeklies. (He briefly returned to public attention last year with the publication of Blake Bailey's biography of John Cheever. Hinckle had married Cheever's daughter Susan, and Cheever had referred to Hinckle as a "wretched buffoon.") For my part, I learned to appreciate Hinckle, and remain grateful for his encouragement. While I was at *City* he commissioned—and paid for—my first study of the Communist party in California, which was eventually much extended and published.

Coppola exercised control over *City*, which had its editorial offices in a one-time red-light district, from his flatiron building at the intersection of Columbus and Kearny streets, on the edge of Chinatown. The lobby now houses a restaurant, the Cafe Zoetrope, named for the early motion-picture technology that Coppola honored when he established his American Zoetrope studio. Walking by this building not too long ago, I noticed a plaque at the entrance, celebrating the building as a workplace for a quartet of directors: Coppola, Werner Herzog, Carroll Ballard, and George Lucas.

What does that roster comprise? A man with two major successes and numerous embarrassing failures; an undeniable genius (Herzog) whose connection to San Francisco is limited at best; a maker of animal pictures, Ballard (*The Black Stallion*); and Lucas, who has probably done more than anyone to destroy the art of cinema in America. Set in the dilapidated core of early San Francisco, that plaque could also summarize Coppola's legacy, in which *City* magazine was just another concept pushed too high to fly. ♦

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B&A

Sacred Monster

Tolstoy's life and well-publicized death.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The Last Station is a wonderful new movie about the final days of Leo Tolstoy. The acting is superb and shaded, the look careful and considered, the writing delicate and literate, the direction restrained and energetic.

The story of Tolstoy's end is one of the most melodramatic in the annals of literary biography, with the 82-year-old genius fleeing his ancestral estate and his wife of 48 years in the middle of the night in November 1910 to begin a directionless pilgrimage in a third-class train car—a pilgrimage that ends a few days later with the greatest writer of his age dying of pneumonia in a railway station.

The Last Station
Directed by Michael Hoffman

Christopher Plummer

STEPHAN RABOLD, COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

To his immense credit, writer-director Michael Hoffman (working from Jay Parini's pedestrian 1990 novel) tells the story at a slight remove. He does not underline or emphasize the collective hysteria among Tolstoy's family and followers that led to his flight and continued to characterize his concluding hours on earth.

The truth is, they *were* hysterical, all of them, Tolstoy and his frantic wife Sonya and his many children and his grasping followers. But an effort to capture the degree of the hysteria on film would have risked turning *The Last Station* into something risible and ridiculous, as opposed to the compelling, moving, and meticulous drama for adults Hoffman has made of it—and in which he has directed both Christopher Plummer (as Tolstoy) and Helen Mirren (as Sonya) in the performances of their lives.

The only real problem here, and it's not a problem with the movie as a movie, is that in trying to treat Tolstoy with the tactful deference due his literary eminence, Hoffman romanticizes and softens him. For in addition to being a very great writer, Tolstoy was also a very great monster, and never more so than in his final innings. In his glorious telling of Tolstoy's life, published in 1968, Henri Troyat offers the brilliant insight that Tolstoy was, in fact, a character only Dostoevsky could have created and understood. It is the nihilistic darkness and cruelty of Tolstoy's character that is missing from *The Last Station*.

Instead, the film portrays Tolstoy as a kindly, generous old lion of a man who is helpless to prevent or intercede in the fight being waged over his name, fortune, works, and legacy. On the one side of the fight are his religious and ideological followers, who have come to embrace the slippery mélange of antinomian religious universalism, pacifism, and egalitarianism known as Tolstoyism. They want him to renounce his possessions, primarily the copyright of his own lucrative body of work, and give them instead to the "people."

On the other side is his wife Sonya, the mother of his 13 children, whom he married when she was barely 18 and toward whom he indulged in an almost unimaginable form of emotional sadism over the course of their nearly five-decade marriage. That sadism—which included giving her ready access to his diaries, with their accounts of his bachelor days of whoremongering and his intense feelings of rage toward her during their marriage—is barely hinted at in the course of *The Last Station*. The Sonya we see is the manipulative, Machiavellian, and altogether intolerable person she apparently was in her husband's final years; but the proximate cause of the degeneration of her personality is given short shrift.

And yet Hoffman does make it clear just how pernicious the Tolstoyans were, especially their pompous and fanatical leader, Vladimir Chertkov (Paul Giamatti, amazing as ever), and how their efforts to convince Tolstoy to surrender his family's wealth in the name of his philosophy had become a pitched battle for its own sake. Chertkov wanted Tolstoy to demonstrate that he loved his "movement" better than his family, and he would stop at nothing to get his way.

But though the Tolstoyan movement itself is viewed with appropriate skepticism in *The Last Station*, the movie takes Tolstoy's ideas seriously—in part, one assumes, because they are so congenial to a post-1960s sensibility, with their invocations of love above all things and Tolstoy's preachment of the doctrine of nonviolent resistance.

In truth, if all the world knew of Tolstoy was the dank nonsense he peddled in the last two decades of his life, and not his standing as the greatest novelist ever to have lived, his name would conjure up nothing more than the image of a deservedly forgotten crank. Hoffman offers a moving portrayal of Tolstoy's death, but it could just as readily have been played as a dark farce, the black comedy of a sick and crazy old man with two strokes under his belt, renouncing his marriage and his possessions and setting off on a train to nowhere in the middle of the night.

That would be another movie, and much harder to take. But arguably more honest. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"The White House has decided that President Barack Obama will not attend what has been an annual summit with the European Union this spring. . . . The decision to skip the EU summit will likely disappoint many Europeans. . . ." —**Wall Street Journal**, *February 1, 2010*

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EU 'Crushed' by White House Snub

Canceled Trip Sends Europe into Tailspin; Obama Surprise Party Ruined

MADRID—European leaders were deeply dismayed by President Barack Obama's decision not to attend their annual

By Laura Meckler and Stephen Fidler

summit this May in Madrid. And though there was mild concern over the domestic challenges the president now faces, most heads of state were fixated on what the decision means for them. "I really hope it wasn't something I said," worried EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy. "I did invite him to my ski chalet in St. Moritz. But maybe I should have stopped myself before describing the hot tub and how it fits four or maybe just two—you know, in case our wives were too tired from shopping."

EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso vented his frustration, saying "it's tough enough running the Commission, but I was also placed in charge of planning the surprise party for President Obama. Between the guest list, the balloons, and the streamers, it turned out to be a real waste of time. Plus Silvio Berlusconi will also be disappointed. He was in charge of the entertainment." Mr. Barroso said he plans on sending a catering bill to White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel because of a nonrefundable deposit.

Meanwhile, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero held back tears when he explained how he was hoping to bake a cake for the American president. "It really was no big deal. Just a *Pastel Vasco con helado de leche merengada* and maybe an *espuma de crema Catalana*. I've only been studying how to make it for the last three months, and the first dozen or so did not taste all that great. Maybe I'll make it for my dog."

The Obama administration insists it never committed to

French citizens react to the announcement that President Obama will not attend the EU summit this May. Flagellants took to the streets in Spain. **A10**

attending the summit. But after hearing the outcries from across the Atlantic, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said that "the Europeans will be absolutely delighted and thrilled when we tell them we are sending over someone with as much clout and prestige as the president, someone who is much loved and respected throughout Europe, indeed throughout the world—Ambassador Richard C. Hol-

Please turn to page A10

Panda Returns to China, Put Under House Arrest

Biden Eats

the weekly Standard
FEBRUARY 15, 2010

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